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MARCEAU

A BIOGRAPHY.

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*François Securin & Marceau  
from a print in the Bibliothèque Nationale!*

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Indexed

# FRANÇOIS-SÉVERIN MARCEAU

1769-1796

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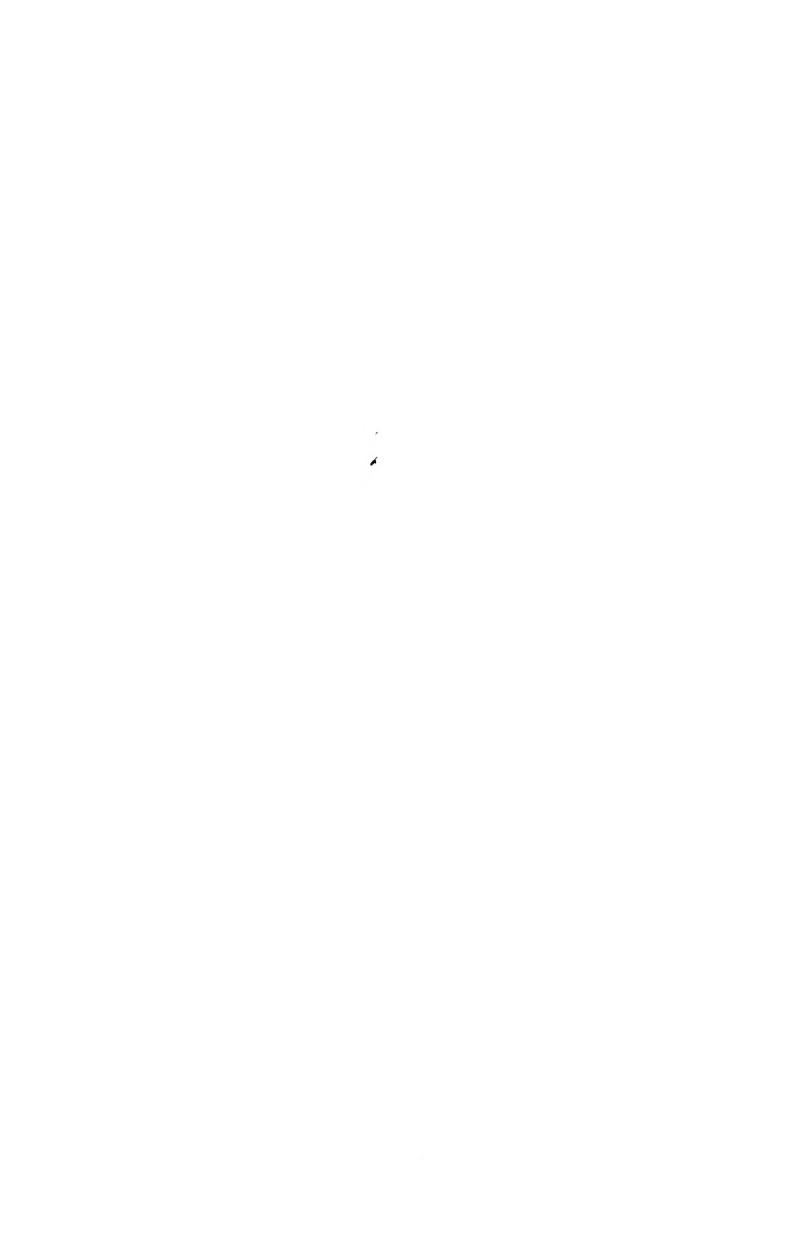
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" By Coblentz, on a rise of gentle ground,  
There is a small and simple pyramid,  
Crowning the summit of the verdant mound ;  
Beneath its base are heroes' ashes hid,  
Our enemy's,—but let not that forbid  
Honour to Marceau ! o'er whose early tomb  
Tears, big tears, gush'd from the rough soldier's lia,  
Lamenting and yet envying such a doom,  
Falling for France, whose rights he battled to resume.

" Brief, brave, and glorious was his young career,—  
His mourners were two hosts, his friends and foes ;  
And fitly may the stranger lingering here  
Pray for his gallant spirit's bright repose ;  
For he was Freedom's champion, one of those,  
The few in number, who had not o'erstept  
The charter to chastise which she bestows  
On such as wield her weapons ; he had kept  
The whiteness of his soul, and thus men o'er him wept."

CHILDE HAROLD, Canto III.





## PREFACE.

“ **I** F we would faithfully depict a great man and place him in a true light, we must not isolate him from the scenes amidst which he has lived. We must, moreover, endeavour to know and understand the epoch that produced him—a task always laborious, but especially so when that epoch is the *French Revolution*.” These words of an illustrious writer contain all the apology that need be made for introducing into this work so much of the history of the period as only concerns Marceau’s life indirectly.

That life, as Marceau himself points out in one of his letters, is wanting in “variety and abundance of material,” and the question might well be asked why such a life is written. It is written because of the pure fire of patriotism that burned, with no unsteady flame, throughout its short portion; because of the strong sense of duty that pervaded it, and because of two or three of its leading incidents which illustrate the truth of Rousseau’s saying, that “the man who has lived most is not he who has counted most years but he who has most felt life.”

But it is the humanity of Marceau that, above all, interests and attracts us. He is the Sidney of his

age as well as the Bayard of the French Revolution, *le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*. In an age of extreme selfishness and revolting cruelty, during a decade of *noyades* and infernal columns, of savage decrees and bloody tribunals, it was not a little thing to have worn "the angel's robe of humanity" under the dolman and cuirass of a soldier of the Revolution. Contrast the instructions of Carnot for the conduct of a guerilla war in Ireland: "*thou shalt pursue the enemy when beaten à outrance, and thou shalt give no quarter to prisoners;*" contrast the decrees of the Convention against the soldiers of the Duke of York and against the unhappy inhabitants of La Vendée, with the whole purport and the leading idea of Marceau's life, and it will become evident that this has something in it that should attract our attention and engage our thoughts, and make us forget, if it cannot altogether obliterate, the stains of barbarity and cruelty that blemish the character of a great nation.

"I see thee yet, fair France—thou favour'd land  
Of art and nature—thou art still before me.  
Thy sons, to whom their labour is a sport,  
So well thy grateful soil returns its tribute ;  
Thy sun-burnt daughters, with their laughing eyes  
And glossy raven locks. But, favour'd France,  
Thou hast many a tale of woe to tell,  
In ancient times as now.'

Unfortunately for herself and for civilization, France is liable, now as in 1793, to be swayed by short-sighted politicians who, too often for narrow and selfish purposes, trade on her enthusiasm and would

make a tool of her patriotism. Now, as one hundred years ago, she is actively preparing to take the field against Europe, and is once more become what the historian said of her in 1793, *one vast camp*. We can therefore only hope that, in the event of a war, the imminence of which increases in proportion to her strength and preparedness for it, there will be not a few in her armies imbued with the spirit of men like Kléber, Hoche, and Marceau ; men who will show to the world not only that a soldier's life is not incompatible with humanity, but that patriotism cannot under any circumstances involve or justify the execution of inhuman and savage decrees.

Those who would read a fuller biography of Marceau are referred to the writings of MM. Boisthibault, Maze, and Parfait, to all of whom this little work is largely and agreeably indebted. For La Vendée, the impartial Beauchamp has been generally relied on ; Thiers, on the other hand, has been found, on a closer acquaintance, wholly unreliable when treating of this portion of his country's history. For the story of Angélique des Mesliers, Chardon and Sergent have been followed ; the latter, indeed, where his imagination does not run riot, has been found useful throughout. The details of Marceau's last hours are taken, with some additions from other sources, from Souhait.

T. G. JOHNSON.



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PART I.

THE EURE-AND-LOIR.

*“The Revolution by the side of youthful figures of giants, such as Danton, Saint-Just, and Robespierre, has young ideal figures, like Hoche and Marceau.”—VICTOR HUGO.*



# BIOGRAPHY OF MARCEAU.

## CHAPTER I.

*Chartres—The family of Desgraviers—Birth and education of Marceau—Enlistment.*

IN the year 1790, in order to deal a final blow at what remained of the old feudal privileges and jurisdictions, the thirty-two ancient provinces of France were split up into eighty-three so-called departments. Thus out of the province of *La Beauce* was carved the greater portion of the department of the Eure-and-Loir, which lies midway between Paris and Rouen on the one side, and the middle courses of the Loire, where it flows past Orleans and Blois, on the other.

At about this same period—1787 to 1790—"that wise and honest traveller," Arthur Young, was on his travels through France. He traversed *Le Pays Beauce*, and found it to contain, as he has recorded, the cream of French husbandry.

But this purely agricultural country, one of the great granaries of France, is little likely to attract the modern traveller. It is an immense and monotonous undulating plain of corn and pasture-land,

studded often with gay orchards and snug, neat cottages, but with no real natural beauty for its dower. The cultivated hills of Perche run through one portion of the district from a north-westerly direction, giving rise on the south side to the Loir and the Huisne, feeders of that great revolutionary stream the Loire, and on the north to the Eure, which mingles its waters, not far above Rouen, with those of the Seine.

On the left bank of the Eure, forty-eight miles south-west of Paris, is situated, partly on a hill and partly on low ground, the ancient town of Chartres, the *chef-lieu* of the department. Its streets are narrow and crooked and devoid of interest, but above them, crowning the gentle valley, rise the two tall unequal steeples of its magnificent cathedral, one of the masterpieces of Gothic architecture in France.

This town of Chartres was the native place of, among others who have acquired fame, Mathurin Regnier, the poet and satirist, and forerunner of Boileau; of the Girondin deputies Pétion and Brissot, members of the National Convention, and two of the most remarkable and impartial minds of the Revolutionary period; of Chauveau-Lagarde, who has a place in history as the defender of the "widow Capet," the unhappy Queen Marie Antoinette.

In the Place Marceau of this town, near the flower-market, there has been raised a pyramid, the legend on which tells us that here also was born another illustrious citizen of France, one Marceau,

whose career is summed up in the following inscription : *A soldier at 16 years, a general at 23, he died at the age of 27 !*

François Sévérin Marceau Desgraviers was born at Chartres in the Rue du Chapelet, now *Rue Marceau*, on the first day of March, 1769, the same year as Napoleon Buonaparte. His father, Maître Marceau Desgraviers, was Registrar of Criminal Justice, and Procureur to the Bailiwick of Chartres.

The ancestors of this Marceau family have been traced back to the year 1575, when we find them established at Thivars, a pretty village that grew up on the spot where the great road from Paris to Bayonne crosses the Eure. The Marceaus were originally all millers, and one branch of the family derived the name *Desgraviers*, by which it afterwards came to be distinguished, from their flour-mill of the same name, situated outside the town of Chartres. The origin of the word *Marceau*, or *Marsault*, has not been satisfactorily traced ; it is connected with the word *saule*, a willow, but in what relation we are unable with certainty to say.

Marceau was a true child of the revolutionary era of France. He was born at a time when the influence of the writings of Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, and the Encyclopædists was awakening the mind of man to a sense of the intolerable burdens imposed on the greater portion of mankind ; when native rationalism and speculative philosophy in France were working hand in hand, the one prompting and supplementing the other, and evolving a new theory of life. Ignorance and

irreligion still brooded over the land. There were few schools, and little or no education worthy of the name, and the nobleman was as ignorant as the peasant. Religion had become a mask for licentiousness and depravity, and the French clergy were held in utter hatred and contempt. It was the hour of the calm before the storm, of the darkness that precedes the dawn. Journalism had already sprung into existence and found a voice; the people were writhing fretfully under suffering, and the nation was beginning to feel the throes that were to give birth to liberty. But there was as yet no consciousness of all this. No man knew that the mightiest change in all human history was maturing. King and noble, priest and courtier heard not the warning voices, and heeded not the signs and omens that filled the air and presaged their ruin. In May, 1770, the marriage of the Archduchess Marie Antoinette with the Dauphin of France, the future Louis XVI., was celebrated with great pomp and high festival.

Into such an age the infant Marceau was ushered.

Marceau's father, Maître Marceau Desgraviers, was an active and able man, but an epicure in his tastes, and given up to the life of pleasure so customary in his day. In the year 1751 he had married Marie Anne Françoise Salmon, of a respectable *bourgeois* family. This worthy woman, after becoming the mother of six children, fell a victim to her husband's caprices, lost her reason, and died in her forty-fourth year. The eldest daughter of this union was Marie Jeanne, whom we shall know



hereafter as *Emira*, the devoted half-sister of the young Marceau, and worthy of a place among the great women who have nourished the youth of great men.

After the conventional period of mourning was over, Maître Desgraviers took unto himself, at the age of forty-seven, a second wife, thinking he had found someone who would manage his troublesome household for him. This was Anne Victoire Gaulier, whose father was an upholsterer, and a member of the Corporation of Chartres. She was only twenty-four years of age, and ill-suited to the charge for which her husband had destined her, being of a careless, frivolous disposition, with a taste only for the reading of romances, and of doubtful light literature. She bore him seven children, of whom the eldest, though he was to win immortal renown by his patriotism, humanity, and fearless generalship, never excited any feelings of tenderness in his mother's heart, and was the subject only of her whims, and of her unreasonable and unnatural aversion.

Marceau was baptized in the parish church of Saint-Saturnin, and named François Sévérin, after his father. From the day of his birth his mother showed a foolish repugnance for her child, and refused to suckle him, or have the charge of him. His father, nothing loath, sent him thereupon to a nurse, whom he had every reason to trust. This was his niece, Marie Jeanne Aubert, who had married a vine-dresser named Claude Houdard. The Houdards lived in the valley of Luisant, not far

from Chartres, and managed certain vineyards, orchards, and cornfields which Maître Desgraviers owned in that part of the country. They had an only child, Anne Catherine, who, though seven years older than the young François, soon became his friend and constant companion, and was affectionately called *Mama Francœur*.

Nothing better could have befallen the child than this planting out in a strange nursery. The Houdards were an honest, tender-hearted couple. They brought up their nephew as if he were their own offspring, and spared no pains to ensure and improve his health and happiness. He was allowed as much liberty, and as many companions, as he liked; and the rough games with the village children, the constant exercise in the lanes and fields, contributed not a little, together with the wholesome farmhouse fare, and the bracing air of La Beauce, to his mental and physical advancement.

Marceau was left for eight years under this fortunate charge. During his exile his parents seldom came to see him, and Madame Houdard soon tired of the weekly visits to a house where her charge was neither welcomed nor wanted.

One member alone of the Chartres household paid frequent visits to the farmhouse in the vale of Luisant, and was a source of constant consolation to the abandoned child. This was François's half-sister, Emira, in whom nature had united a great and generous heart, and a bright and lively intelligence, and who has shown to the world, by her

living example, what the sympathy and care of a woman so constituted is able to effect in it. We shall have occasion to introduce her frequently into these pages, for her life is linked with that of her young brother, whose friend and guardian-angel she continued to be until the hour of his death.

Marie Jeanne Louise Françoise Suzanne, eldest daughter of Maître Desgraviers by his first wife, was born in 1753, and was thus sixteen years older than her half-brother, François. At the age of fifteen she had been persuaded by her father into marrying one Nicolas Champion, a judge's clerk, for whom, however, she had no feelings akin to love or respect. She was only prompted to this self-sacrifice by the prospect it afforded her of leaving a home cursed by the presence of an indolent and cold-hearted step-mother. In spite of the domestic troubles which naturally followed such an union, and in order to make up for the unnatural mother's neglect, Emira now began to lavish on her half-brother all the love and the tender solicitude that should have been Madame Victoire's for her eldest child.

Emira paid frequent visits to the farm at Luisant, attaching herself by an almost maternal instinct to the child, teaching him his lessons both here and when he was put to school, guiding his mind and moulding his character.

When five years old Marceau was sent with his cousin Catherine to a small school for boys and girls, kept by one Noël Létard, an old invalid, who was assisted by the curé of Luisant. There was

not much discipline, but there were many holidays. This suited a temperament like Marceau's, brought up, as he had been, without restraint, and accustomed to outdoor life, and the playing of boyish pranks, rather than to sitting still, poring over his letters, under the ferule of the village schoolmaster. But the twofold influence of *Mama Francœur* and of his sister Emira did not fail to produce good results, and when Marceau left the school, in his seventh year, he was already in the highest class.

It was not till Marceau was nearly eight years old that his father thought of sending for him. The Houdards were glad, for the child's sake, at his departure ; but *Mama Francœur* wept bitter tears, and would not be comforted till her young companion had promised to come and see his nurse and playmate as often as possible. Catherine Houdard later in life married, like her mother, an honest vine-dresser, and Marceau acted as bridesman at her wedding, and as godfather to her first-born.

Arrived home after an absence of eight years, no outpourings of affection, no tender words of love welcomed Marceau. All was coldly and strictly ordered for him in his home. Time had not softened his mother's heart towards him, although at this period we find him a refined and handsome lad. He had a natural and prepossessing manner, slight but well-shaped limbs, and an erect carriage, while an alert though sometimes sad expression lit up his sunny countenance. But he had not yet developed those auburn locks which were to be so characteristic of the soldier of the republic in the

years to come, and so his mother's heart remained hardened towards her child because of his red hair and his rough ways.

His father had intended that he should have a good school and collège education, but having disgraced himself one day in the eyes of madame, his mother, he was packed off once more, this time to an insignificant Brothers' school in the lower town.

After the lapse of a year his father relented, and Marceau was sent to the Institute of Professor Chevalier, of Chartres, to be prepared for college, and with a final view to the bar as a profession. Assisted and encouraged by his sister Emira, who visited him almost daily, Marceau made rapid progress in his studies, and grew up a lively and spirited boy, somewhat fiery at times, fond of outdoor sports and riding, and of every healthy manly form of amusement and exercise. Thanks to Emira's loving counsels and practical guidance, and to the excellent teaching of the justly famous Chevalier, Marceau was admitted in 1781, at the age of thirteen, to the fifth class of the Royal College of Chartres.

Among his companions at the Chevalier Institute were many who afterwards became known to fame, and not a few who took a leading part in the Revolution now about to burst over France; but we will mention only one insignificant name, that of Constantine Maugars, to whom Marceau wrote some of his most touching letters, and for whom he evinced an affection that time and the brilliance of his career only strengthened and deepened.

Unfortunately, at this moment, and when she could have been most useful to him during his college career, and during the bitter years that followed, his sister Emira, Madame Champion, was obliged, in order to escape from marital tyranny, to quit Chartres and bury herself in the Abbey of Louye, near Dourdan, in the department of the Seine and Oise, until such time as the separation between herself and her husband, for which she had applied, should be judicially decreed.

By this separation Marceau found himself isolated and unhappy. Shunned by his parents, and denied a place in the family circle, in his sister Emira he had found the affection that should have been a mother's, and the pride and solicitude that was expected from a father. "The love of my elder sister for me," he afterwards wrote in his journal, "although we were not born of the same mother, was without bound or limit. Up to this period she had restrained my too ardent nature, soured withal by so much opposition. Her sympathy and kindness had made me alter my plans at least twenty times. Certain unhappy events now obliged her to leave our town and live in the country. In her absence, and thrown on my own resources, I immediately fell into the depths of despair."

The correspondence between brother and sister while the latter was in the convent has unfortunately been lost. It was probably confiscated with the public papers of Emira's second husband, Sergeant, who held several posts under the First Republic. The world has thus lost a series of letters whose

interest, from more than one point of view, must have been unique and universal.

Marceau's college career was brief, but on the whole successful. During these years he did not live at home, where he was never welcome, but at the house of Professor Chevalier. As at the Institute, he made several friends at the college, for his was a generous and affectionate nature, though liable at times to sudden outbursts of passion. He took a prominent part in all sports and pastimes, but continued, nevertheless, to be studious and painstaking. During his collegiate career he passed through three classes, and was, on the whole, as we have stated, a successful though never brilliant student.

"My education," he himself records in a journal preserved for us, but which, unfortunately, only deals with a portion of his life, "was that of other young men of the middle class; that is to say, on emerging from infancy I was placed in a college to go through a course of classical studies. The events of this period of my life, as regards any of those I came in contact with, are not of sufficient importance to need relating here. Pranks of every kind, great aptitude for learning, small outbursts of passion, the result of a hot temperament and a haughty nature, these distinguished me from some of my class-fellows, whose small natural gifts compelled them to study a great deal in order to acquire a little learning. All who resembled me most in character were my friends; I was envied and hated only by the dolts and dullards. I have preserved

the memory of the former only ; as for the latter, I have entirely forgotten them. At the age of fourteen I had carried off several prizes, and then my school studies may be said to have ended."

Maître Desgraviers took his son away from the college after he had passed through the third class, and set him to study law and procedure in the office of Procureur Champion, with a view to a career at the bar. This was an occupation most distasteful to Marceau, and was the occasion of a bitter quarrel between him and his parents, which led him at last to abandon them and quit Chartres. Marceau thus speaks of this event :

" My parents at this time thought of a profession for me, wishing me to find one in a career at the bar. Now, I had a real aversion for such studies and their application, and I spoke my mind out freely on the subject. My independence placed an obstacle in the way of their plans for me, and led to my parents treating me with even less respect than they did my brothers and sisters. I had a decided taste for the military profession, . . . and I resolved to use every means in my power to induce my father to yield to my wishes in the matter. And I should perhaps have succeeded had it not been for my mother, who had some interest in wishing me to take the gown, and whose opposition I found insurmountable. Neither my tears nor my entreaties could make her yield. She exercised a strong influence over my father. I was offered no alternative, not even that of trade, which in my despair I had suggested.



"I fancied that by persisting in my wishes I might justify the despair I had been driven to, and that, by continuing to be amenable, my parents would sacrifice their wishes to mine as regards the choice of a profession, in which I alone should have been consulted. It was this that prevented me from at once leaving my home, and compelled me to live as a stranger during the last six months of my college life. At the end of that time I had resolved to do all I could with my father, and to go I know not where if he persisted in his commands.

"The hope raised in my heart brought me, however, but little peace of mind. Those six months soon passed, and the time drew near for fresh struggles, and for opening a career for myself either of happiness or of misery. I have long since realized how the first step we are obliged to take towards a decided end influences the remainder of our lives.

"I had quite made up my mind not to abandon my first project, and I was fully prepared to obtain by my own exertions what I might have obtained by favour or money. It was my intention to become a soldier in order that I might rise to be an officer, and as my father would not go back on his first resolution I left him and enlisted."

Before Marceau took this step he wrote to his sister, informing her of his intention, telling her also of his wish to drop the cognomen Desgraviers, retaining only the simple name Marceau. "I am a stranger to the Desgraviers," he complains in his letter, "I have no place in any of their hearts; you

alone have taken me to yours. I do not wish to retain their very name any longer. In society I will take that of their father, the name Marceau, leaving to them the one they bear. But you, my dear sister, must not forsake me, your son. For to you I owe all, as to a tender mother. Promise me that, like me, you will only keep the name Marceau. We two alone are united by the ties of love."

He carried his intention into effect by enlisting on the 2nd December, 1784, in the infantry regiment of Angoulême. The engagement was, however, annulled, at the instance of his mother, as he was a minor. He was brought back, and a reconciliation took place between father and son, and the idea of the bar was abandoned.

Another unhappy year followed. The ever-increasing coldness with which his parents treated him, only strengthening his resolution to leave them and join the army. He was not idle during this interval, for we find him studying mathematics, topography, and other sciences, with two learned professors of Chartres. At length, on the 2nd December, 1785, having already attained the age of sixteen, he finally turned his back on his home, and enlisted in the Savoie-Carignan regiment of infantry.

In the enlistment register he is described as five feet nine and a half inches in height, with fair hair and brows, dark-brown eyes, a prominent forehead, covered by a shock of hair, a small mouth, and a freckled face. Up to the date of his leaving Chartres he had shown himself an active, robust youth, devoted to all exercises and games, and especially

to gymnastics, riding, and the chase ; and we find that in spite of mother and father, and because, no doubt, of his generous heart, he left behind him many sincere friends, who would regret his absence while they sympathized with him in his misfortunes.

## CHAPTER II.

*Apprenticeship to arms—Leave of absence—Marie Maugars  
—The Bastille—With Lafayette—Chartres once more—  
The call to arms—With the battalion of the Eure-and-Loir  
—Reims and the eve of war.*

THE Savoie - Carignan regiment, in which Marceau had enlisted, formed part of the garrison of the fortress of Metz, and thither he accordingly journeyed towards the end of the year 1785 ; his engagement dating in the register of the regiment from the 2nd December of that year.

He served his apprenticeship to the profession of arms obscurely enough during a period of three years, that is, up to the date of his return to Chartres, in 1788. He was promoted in this time to the two first non-commissioned grades in succession, and appears to have both won the respect of his comrades, and attracted to himself, by his irreproachable conduct and studious ways, the attention of his commandant, the Count de Serent. It is even stated that he now studied the biographies of great military commanders, such as Charles XII., Peter the Great, Marshal Saxe, and Frederick of Prussia. But the life must, on the whole, have been irksome to one

possessed at once of so ardent and refined a nature and so keen a sense of justice.

For the army of France was not then, what it became soon after, a service where talent and genius, irrespective of birth or class, were alone recognized and assured success. Under the old government it partook of the aristocratic spirit of the age, and, as in every other department, there was the gulf of centuries fixed between the nobleman and the *roturier*. The higher grades of military rank were reserved exclusively for the court nobility, and even ordinary commissions were bestowed only on wealthy landed proprietors. It can well be imagined that under such distinctions there could have been no sympathy or community of interests between the rank and file and the officers of the army, and that the latter lived apart from, and altogether despised, the former, as belonging to a lower order of humanity.

It was only after the fall of the Bastille that the constitution of the army entered on a new phase. It was then that National Guards were organized in Paris and throughout the provinces. The middle classes formed the main strength of these new battalions, and they elected their officers from their own ranks. Then followed, in 1790, a more complete and systematic organization, under which all ancient distinctions and privileges were abolished, and seniority, merit, and patriotism, made the sole titles to promotion. Under the new system, health, vigour, and unity, were imparted to the army, which was inspired at the same time with an ebullient patriotism that carried all before it in its heat and

fervour, and enabled France to contend successfully with the formidable array of the principalities and powers of the rest of Europe.

But these things were not so when Marceau joined the ranks. The road to advancement was closed, except in the instance stated above, against the middle and lower orders. Moreover, at this time, Prussian discipline was enforced in all its rigour, and the lot of the private soldier was a hard and barren one, devoid of all hope of preferment or substantial reward.

“The first two years of my service,” Marceau has recorded, “made me regret ever having left my parents. Instead of any recognition of my submission to discipline and devotion to duty, I received nothing but haughty and disdainful language from my superiors. The good work I did failed to bring me under favourable notice in the service. At the end of three years, when I had been promoted two grades, I was considered fortunate in being appointed instructor to certain imbecile and reckless young officers of the regiment. But my disgust reached a climax when I learnt the opinion that was held of me and my comrades. I determined to abandon as soon as I could a service in which there was no advancement, save to those of good birth. Having viewed my situation in a new light I recalled to mind the proposals my parents had made to me, but which I had rejected.”

Acting on this intention of carrying out what his parents had formerly required of him, Marceau obtained leave of absence from his regiment, and

passed the winter of 1788-89 among his friends at Chartres.

This residence at Chartres was the commencement of Marceau's public life. A reconciliation with his parents was effected, and it was his object to succeed his father in his office, and to abandon for ever a military career. What he had experienced during his three years' military apprenticeship had disgusted him profoundly; but there was a still more potent reason for his desiring to settle down in Chartres to a life of peace and industry. Marceau had fallen in love with Marie Maugars, the sister of his schoolfellow Constantine, and with whom he had been acquainted from childhood. "Love that is at once so terrible and so tender," says Marceau's journal, "made me feel his power for the first time." From this period dates that yearning of Marceau's, which never left him in his brief life, to win the love of some pure gentle woman, with whom he might pass his days in a peaceful and intellectual seclusion. Through the weary years of watch and battle on the Loire and the Rhine this yearning still clung to him. It was destined never to be satisfied. That life of domestic happiness and reciprocal feeling could only have been lived after the sword had been sheathed, and the sword was only sheathed to be placed, with garlands of woe, on the bed of death.

This is the keynote to Marceau's life; this it is that gives to it at once its elevation and its sadness. From this spring flow that humanity and lofty courage and that sense of duty which raise this

young warrior above so many others who have otherwise surpassed him by their achievements in campaign and stricken field.

He now applied for his discharge from the infantry of the line, but his colonel, the Count de Serent, obstinately refused to grant his request. The utmost that was conceded to him was, that he should stay in Paris for a few months to help to unravel the tangled skein of the accounts of his corps.

In the spring of the memorable year 1789, Marceau accordingly left Chartres for Paris. He had already in his own province heard the loud complaints of his fellow-citizens against the abuses of what may be summed up as the old regime. The scion of a middle-class family, of an impulsive independent disposition, filled with indignation against the unjust claims of aristocratic birth, and alive to the people's wrongs, now calling aloud for adjustment, we can realize with what feelings of wonder and expectation the young republican entered Paris, that great and throbbing heart of his country. It was the irresistible compulsion of circumstance that bore him away from the quiet waters of Chartres and plunged him into the seething ocean of the metropolis, but the necessities of his nature, and the guiding hand of his half-sister Emira steered him safely, though not without considerable risk and some damage, past the rocks and shoals of revolt and revolution, where so many others, embarked like him, suffered loss and shipwreck.



“The Revolution,” says Victor Hugo, “by the side of youthful figures of giants, such as Danton, Saint-Just, and Robespierre, has young ideal figures, like Hoche and Marceau.” Two paths lay before these men at the opening of their young lives. The one led to the glory that emanates from fighting, humanely and with singleness of purpose, the battles of one’s country ; the other, to the darkness and depravity which overwhelm those who cavil away the lives and liberties of human creatures because they have failed to adjust their passions and principles to ours. The two careers arose out of the same set of circumstances ; but who that is honest can mention Robespierre in the same breath with Hoche, or Saint-Just with Marceau ? Who can deny that the choice of Hoche and Marceau was influenced and regulated by higher and less interested motives than that of men, needy lawyers one-half of them, who flooded Paris in the guise of deputies of the people, but actuated only by sordid hopes and a selfish ambition ?

In Paris, Marceau met his sister Emira again. Though she was still living in seclusion in the convent of Louye, he managed to see her frequently and whenever his duties permitted. For seven hours a day he was kept at the work of adjusting the accounts of his regiment, but at the beginning of July this task was accomplished, and Marceau was on the point of rejoining his corps when events in Paris compelled or induced him to remain.

We have seen that during the reign of Louis XV. no one thought of the impending convulsion. “The

night is serene, the sunset fair, which precedes the fury of the tornado," says Le Père Ségur. But the storm had now burst. On the 5th May, 1789, the States-General opened their proceedings and, simultaneously, the era of the French Revolution. Events succeeded each other rapidly. By June the representatives of the Tiers-État, outnumbering, thanks to Necker, those of the other two orders combined, had usurped the entire authority, and assumed the name and functions of the National Assembly. Early in July the French Guards revolted in sympathy with the masses. The excitement and enthusiasm of the people, now feeling their power, rose to its highest pitch. On the 14th July the Bastille was stormed and taken.

Marceau, like Hoche, took part in that first triumph of the arms of freedom. But it must not be for a moment thought that he contributed to the excesses that followed in its wake, especially to the murder of the Governor Delaunay. That was the work of the infuriated mob from whose clutches the French Guards, whom Marceau had joined, endeavoured in vain to rescue this brave man, as well as several other victims.

Through the instrumentality of friends, Marceau now procured his discharge and was about to return to his country and his first love, when he was persuaded by his fellow-townsmen, Pétion and Brissot, among others, to join General Lafayette, who was in command of the National Guard of Paris, a civic force established after the fall of the Bastille, and destined to play so prominent a part in the drama

of the next few years. Marceau was appointed an extra aide-de-camp to Lafayette himself, a post which he held for five months.

Of these five months and of the life he led in Paris Marceau records the following confession: "I say it honestly that it was a period that I divided between disordered pleasures and extraordinary work, to the great grief of my poor sister Emira." The labours referred to were studies in military subjects, and a "Manual of Instruction for the National Guard," which he wrote at this period, and which was officially adopted.

At last he was almost compelled by Emira to leave Paris and abandon his mode of life there. "I should," says his confession, "certainly have succumbed under such an existence had not my sister, feeling that I was throwing my life away, used all her influence over me, and held me back on the brink of the abyss. She forced me to leave Paris and to return to Chartres, where, moreover, we had both been summoned by our father's illness."

Arrived at Chartres in October, 1789, he found the fortunes of his family at a very low ebb. A decree of the Constituent Assembly reorganizing the judicial system had practically abolished Maître Séverin's office and emoluments, and the troubles that came upon every family in France at that period had not overlooked the Desgraviers. Marceau did all in his power to assist his parents. His first act was to break off his engagement with Marie Maugars, followed by another step equally distasteful to him, namely, to rejoin the army, as no

other prospect offered itself. During the six months he spent at Chartres he finished another military manual, his "Treatise on Infantry Tactics." In response to the call of the Constituent Assembly, for active citizens to join the regular army as officers, Marceau submitted his application to the Minister of War, but it was ten months before he was successful.

Meanwhile other duties were imposed on him. One of the consequences of the capture of the Bastille was the formation, throughout France, of provincial National Guards, on the model of that of Paris, under Lafayette. Marceau joined the National Guard of Chartres, and served in it during 1790-91 in the capacity of captain and company-commander.

When the frontiers of France were menaced by the armies of Austria and Prussia, this National Militia was organized into volunteer battalions, and 300,000 men were enrolled and requisitioned.

On the 27th June, 1791, Marceau was enrolled at the head of his entire company. The department of the Eure-and-Loir furnished two battalions, and Marceau was elected to the command of the second company in the first battalion. At the same time he obtained a brevet-lieutenancy in the 34th Regiment of the Line. This placed him in a dilemma, for he did not wish to abandon the young men of his town who had volunteered with him, and looked to him as their leader. A way was found out of the difficulty by appointing him to the staff of the army as adjutant-major of the first battalion of the Eure-and-Loir.

In December, 1791, Marceau accompanied this battalion to Reims in the Champagne Province, where it was ordered to form part of the regular garrison. He spent the next six months at Reims.

The year 1792 was an eventful one for Marceau, and it marks for us the opening of his brief but brilliant active military career.

On the 11th February, Marie Maugars, the young girl to whom Marceau had been betrothed, died at Chartres, on which occasion he wrote to her brother Constantine the first of those letters which form so precious a part of the correspondence that unfolds his life and thoughts to us: "I do not wish to say overmuch," he writes, "on a subject that justifies your tears. The friendship that unites us can alone fill the void made in our hearts by this cruel loss. . . But, my dear friend, before long you will, I hope, feel that you have not lost all. Since, as I have already told you, there still remains to you one true friend who loves you tenderly."

This offer of friendship was not the mere formal expression of sympathy during bereavement. Marceau's thoughts, like all great and tender ones, sprang from his heart, and he wrote what he thought, and acted up to what he wrote. Already in his second letter to Constantine we find him taking a lively interest in the welfare of Maugar's brother, who had joined the battalion of the Eure-and-Loir at Reims.

In March of this year he was elected lieutenant-colonel and second in command of the first battalion.

Of this election, and of his work at Reims, he says : "During the six months I passed at Reims, I was constantly occupied in instructing the troops. I instructed myself too, in order that by showing zeal and diligence in the important post I now held I might meet with advancement and success. I received from my comrades a further proof of their esteem and confidence, for when war was declared, they nominated me a lieutenant-colonel. Still young, and the youngest of those of my rank, I neglected nothing in order that I might distinguish myself and realize the expectations of my friends. My labours did not pass unnoticed, and every general under whom I served in the first campaign testified to my good work in a marked manner." Among these generals he particularly mentions Lafayette, who wished to attach Marceau to his staff, and whose desertion of the cause of the Republic its armies and posterity were soon to deplore.

In April, 1792, war was declared by the French government against the Emperor of Austria and his allies. The causes of that war, and the part played in it by Marceau, will form the subject of the next chapter. One event we must anticipate here, namely, the death of Marceau's father on the 19th May.

In July, after his father's death, the news of which only now reached him through Emira, and still mindful of the past, he wrote to his mother : "I will only ask that you should regard me as one of your sons, and as one who by his present and future conduct will one day fully merit your love

and tenderness. I beg of you not to leave me longer in uncertainty either as to your indifference or your friendship for me. Let my brothers and sisters, too, be assured of my love for them."

"This appeal, this language," says Maze, "seem most touching to us. Marceau has written other letters more affectionate perhaps, but none that reveals more clearly the generosity of his soul. He wishes to be reconciled to his family before he marches out to meet the enemy." It is not known whether his appeal found any response in the cold heart of the obdurate and shallow-minded mother.

On the 4th May Marceau wrote his last letter from Reims. This was to Constantine Maugars: "We leave to-morrow and hope to be at Montmédy in four days, about half a league off the enemy. A week after our arrival I hope to be able to give you definite news as to what part we are to play in the ensuing campaign."

### CHAPTER III.

*At the front—Desertion of Lafayette—Invasion of France—  
Defence and surrender of Verdun—In the enemy's camp—  
Ste. Menchould and the Bois du Courrupt.*

ON the 5th May, 1792, Marceau accompanied the two battalions of the Eure-and-Loir when they were despatched to Montmédy to form part of the garrison there. To arrive at the reason for this forward movement, and to realize the nature of the struggle in which Marceau played, for one so young, so prominent a part, we must make a brief survey of what took place in 1792 on the frontier between Dunkirk and Bâle, dwelling here and there on those events of military history more directly connected with this biography.

The year 1792 was the most important in the military annals of the French Revolution. In that year France proved to Europe that her republican armies could contend, and contend successfully, with the choicest troops of Austria and Prussia. In that year also commenced the long struggle of Europe against French invasion and innovation, scarcely terminated by Waterloo and the downfall of Napoleon.

The conduct of the National Assembly and of



the mob of Paris had alarmed the crowned heads of Europe. Asylum was offered to the emigrant nobles of France, who had fled beyond the frontier, and the armies of Austria and Prussia were moved up to support their designs. The French government complained, with reason, of this encouragement, seeing that it allowed large bodies of the emigrants to be assembled at Coblenz, Trèves, and other places uncomfortably near the French frontier. The Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia and the Electors, on the other hand, had equal cause of complaint against the propagandism of France, which aimed at overthrowing their thrones by means similar to those which had undermined the ancient monarchy of France. They particularized the violation by France of the seigniorial and proprietary rights of the Catholics and nobles in Alsace, and the illegal annexation of Avignon and the Venaissin. The ultimatum of the Emperor, now addressed to the French, required the restitution of these rights and acquisitions, as well as the re-establishment of monarchy in France on its former footing of independence.

This ultimatum was, of course, rejected in Paris, and war declared against the Emperor on the 20th April. Neither Prussia nor Austria had any wish for war, but France was burning to dislodge the *émigrés*, and to spread everywhere the revolutionary spirit which animated her. "Their revolution," said the French, "could not stand still. It must advance and embrace other countries, or perish in their own."

The desire for war was universal in France, and its declaration on the 20th April was hailed with joy and enthusiasm. The real intention of the powers, allied together by the treaty of Pilnitz and subsequent conventions, was to form a bulwark against the attacks of the new spirit of aggression, to obtain indemnities for the German princes and their Catholic subjects, and if possible to restore the constitutional and personal liberty of Louis XVI.

In the armies of the Republic there were many sincere and earnest men who, at this time, wavered in their allegiance, and whom the dethronement of the king in August finally estranged from the republican cause. But there were also not a few whose love of freedom and justice was not terrified or diminished by the excesses of the mob and the politicians of Paris, and whose devotion to the French Republic, and service in her armies, was characterized by singleness of purpose, and by upright, honest conduct, both during the doubtful opening days of the first campaign, as well as throughout the years wherein victory ensured unity.

Among the number of these we might reckon Marceau. From the outset he never hesitated as to the side he should espouse, nor wavered in the part he had to play. To support the Republic by overcoming her enemies, wherever met, and whoever they might be, was the single rôle that destiny and inclination assigned to him.

The eastern frontier of France, from Dunkirk to Bâle, was defended in those days, first, by a chain of fortresses, created by the genius of Vauban, extend-

ing along the Belgian frontier and down to Metz ; then by the Meuse and Moselle valleys, and, further south, by the Vosges mountains and the Rhine. A force of 150,000 men had been put in requisition throughout France to guard this extensive frontier. The Army of the North, under Rochambeau, protected it from Dunkirk to Philippeville, the armies of the Ardennes and the centre, commanded by Lafayette, from Philippeville to Landau, while a force of 45,000 men, under Lückner, lay along the Rhine between Lauterburg and Bâle.

As early as May a force of 120,000 Austrians, Prussians, Hessians, and *émigrés* had been collected, and extended along this frontier, with Mons, Coblenz, and Mayence as bases of attack or defence. The initial attack of the Allies, not taking into account their movements in the Netherlands, was directed against the French centre at Sedan and Metz, where Lafayette and Kellermann commanded respectively forces of 25,000 and 20,000 men. The first line of the French defence lay along the fortified towns of Montmédy, Longwy, Thionville, Saarlouis, and Bitsch. Behind these lay the great fortresses of Mezières, Sedan, Verdun, and Metz, and the woody heights of the Ardennes and the Argonne.

The Allies purposed to break through these lines into the Champagne province, and so secure the great road to Chalons and Paris.

On the 25th July the Duke of Brunswick broke up his camp at Coblenz, and on the 30th of the same month the French territory was invaded by

the Allies, 60,000 Prussians under Brunswick forming the centre, with 20,000 Austrians under Clerfayt on the right flank, and 10,000 Hessians and 16,000 Austrians on the left.

All available troops had been hurried up to the front to meet the invaders, including the two volunteer battalions of the Eure-and-Loir, who formed part of the army of the Ardennes, and had already, as we have seen, been ordered to proceed to Montmédy.

On the eve of the struggle a great misfortune befell the French army by the desertion of their general, Lafayette. Loyal at heart to the monarchy, though a lover of abstract liberty, disgusted with the circumstances accompanying the overthrow of the throne and the imprisonment of his king and queen, frustrated in his endeavours to rouse the army and march at its head to Paris, on the 20th August he crossed over to the enemy's lines, leaving behind him a message to his countrymen, as characteristic of him as of the times in which he lived. "Continue to love liberty," he wrote, "in spite of its storms, and serve your country."

Such were the farewell words of one whom Marceau had served and intimately known. It is impossible to suppose that a character such as Lafayette's, with its large experiences of life in both the new and the old world, could have failed to leave a strong and lasting impression on the mind of the young and vigilant soldier. We can indeed plainly discern how many of the nobler qualities of the former reappear in the latter; the love of liberty and order, the humane pity and the

magnanimity that owed no account to prudence of its motives.

Dumouriez took Lafayette's place at Sedan, the whole army, except that on the Rhine, being at the same time placed under his command.

Lafayette's desertion was naturally the cause of considerable excitement and alarm in the army of the Ardennes. Many of the officers who had served under him were shaken in their allegiance, many actually deserted and joined the *émigrés*, thinking, though of course wrongly, that they were following the example of their chief. When the news reached Montmédy, the volunteer battalions, including those of the Eure-and-Loir, took it as a signal and a favourable opportunity for disbanding and returning home. Marceau, who was in temporary command of his battalion, ordered it to assemble, and succeeded by his fervid and patriotic language in not only preventing its dissolution, but in instilling into it some of his own enthusiasm and patriotic ardour. "Comrades," he said, at the close of his address, "can your commanders make you forget your country? If they desert their posts, does this give you any right to abandon yours? It is at the front alone, face to face with the enemy, that honour can be won."

For Marceau at least there was no doubt or compunction as to what line of conduct he should pursue. He was already master of himself as of men. The enemies of liberty and of his country were at its gates; what else was required of the patriotic at heart and of soul than to go forth and do battle with that foe?

But the tide of invasion rolled by Montmédy. The Allies, mustering before that town and Thionville, proceeded to attack Longwy, which lay between these towns, and on the 22nd August compelled it to surrender. The strong fortress of Verdun, on the Meuse, the work of Vauban, lay next in their path, and its garrison had to be hastily reinforced and provisioned. Among the troops sent to its aid were the two battalions of the Eure-and-Loir. Marceau arrived at Verdun on the 30th August, and on the same day the Allies occupied the heights of St. Michael, and encamped before it. The Prussians threw a bridge across the Meuse, and were not long in completing the investment of the town.

The fortifications of Verdun had fallen into disrepair, but this defect had been remedied to some extent. It was not expected that Verdun, however strong its defences, could, with its small garrison of 3,500 men, and meagre supply of provisions, hold out for any time against the entire invading army. But at least as protracted a defence as was under the circumstances possible was expected of it, in order to give the French army time to concentrate in rear of it from the cantonments of Metz and Sedan. These were certainly the views of its commander, the brave Beaurepaire, and his lieutenants, among whom we may include Marceau.

On the 31st August an aide-de-camp arrived in Verdun bearing a message from the Duke of Brunswick, and calling upon Beaurepaire to surrender the fortress unconditionally in the name of Louis XVI. This letter was read before the Communal Council,

and the following reply, signed by Beaurepaire, returned :

“ The Commandant and the troops of the garrison of Verdun have the honour to inform the Duke of Brunswick that the defence of the place has been intrusted to them by the King of the French people, of whose loyalty it is impossible to doubt. They cannot in consequence, without being wanting in the fidelity they owe to him as well as to the nation and its ordinances, surrender the place so long as there remains to them any means of defence. They hope also, in so acting, to win the esteem of the illustrious warrior with whom they will have the honour to cross swords.”

This message was delivered before noon. During the whole of the remainder of the day a brisk artillery fire was kept up against the enemy, but it failed to have much effect on the besiegers, who were too far off, and protected by the formation of the ground they occupied. Late in the evening several Prussian batteries opened fire on the town, which they continued to shell throughout that night. Very little damage was done, and few persons were injured, but the effect on the cowardly town's-people, and on the volunteers, who had never before been under artillery fire, was disastrous. The latter joined the townsfolk, and paraded the streets in disorderly gangs, and it needed all the energy and authority of Beaurepaire and his lieutenants to restore order in the town, and maintain discipline among the volunteers of the National Guard.

On the 1st September a second summons was

received from the enemy and laid before the council. Marceau accompanied Beaurepaire to the meeting, and warned him on the way thither that the majority of the council were in favour of capitulation. Arrived there Beaurepaire endeavoured in vain to convince the Council of Defence of the urgent necessity of protracting the siege. Marceau supported his chief with all the eloquence he could command. "We owe it to our country," he said, "and honour demands that we should go to the very end. Let us die, if needs be, in defending this place, fortified by Vauban, and made illustrious by the memory of Cluvert; let us die, I say, rather than surrender it lightly to the stranger." The meeting then became stormy, and it was necessary to adjourn till the following day.

At three o'clock of the same afternoon Commandant Beaurepaire was found lying dead on the floor of the council chamber with his skull broken in and his pistols at his side. History has been unable to place the cause of his death beyond all doubt or dispute, but the evidence points to assassination rather than suicide, and it is not idle to conjecture that the same hand that committed the foul deed had something to do with the unsigned missive of surrender received the same evening by the Duke of Brunswick.

The remains of Beaurepaire were escorted to the citadel by the Mayenne and Loire volunteers, while profound gloom reigned in the hearts of the military chiefs who had served and learnt to respect him. Marceau in particular had become much attached



to Beaurepaire, "finding in him all that he himself possessed of ardour, disinterestedness, and love of country."<sup>1</sup>

The Council of Defence met again on the morning of the 2nd September, when one Neyon, of the Meuse battalion, was elected commandant. It was decided at the same time to surrender the fortress on the conditions prescribed by the Duke of Brunswick.

By a custom long prevalent in the army, the youngest officer present in the garrison had to carry the white flag of truce and the letter of capitulation to the Prussian camp. This officer was Lieutenant-Colonel Marceau, then only twenty-two years of age. It must have been particularly galling to Marceau, who had so vehemently raised his voice against surrender, to have to perform this duty; to be the spokesman of those whom he knew to be actuated by motives of cowardice, if not by treason and disloyalty.

On the morning of the 2nd September Marceau, preceded by a trumpeter carrying a white flag, left Verdun for the enemy's camp, through which he was conducted to the tent of the King of Prussia with his eyes bandaged.

It is said that when the bandage was removed it was noticed that Marceau's eyes were filled with tears. The story is not incredible, seeing how degrading and distasteful a task had fallen to the lot of the brave youth who had advocated that it would be better to die than surrender the great fortress ignominiously.

<sup>1</sup> M. Parfait.

Marceau was next taken before the Duke of Brunswick, and now on his return to Verdun, in passing through the groups of Prussian soldiers, he had to undergo the further humiliation of their triumphant looks, which spoke to him of their easily-bought victory.

The capitulation was accepted by the Duke of Brunswick in the name of the King of Prussia, and General Kalreuth returned to Verdun with Marceau to arrange the details with Commandant Neyon.

Marceau, it is said, pleaded hard with the Duke of Brunswick, in the name of the volunteer commanders, that the battalions of Mayenne-Loire and of the Charente should be allowed to take with them the guns they had brought with them, as these were their own property. This, although against the custom of war, was conceded, and the terms of capitulation allowed the garrison to leave the fortress by the Gate of France with arms and baggage, and with four field-pieces, conformably to the demands of the commandant.

It is also alleged that Marceau was present when Neyon and the Municipal Council were assembled to regulate the order of surrender. Hearing the details, and that a deputation of women was to be allowed to wait on Frederick William II., to thank him for his clemency and magnanimity, Marceau left the hall, and was only prevented from taking his own life by being suddenly called away to the citadel, where the volunteer commanders were arranging for their departure, and for the transport of the body of Beaurepaire. We give this

story for what it is worth ; it has little authority to support it.

When Marceau came back from the Prussian camp to Verdun he found the town being pillaged by the people. He himself had lost his clothes and 400 livres, all he had saved. Order was not restored until the Prussians entered and took possession of the town on the evening of the 2nd September.

On the 3rd September, as agreed, the French troops evacuated the fortress, taking their arms with them. The procession set out at an early hour. At its head rode several squadrons of Prussian cavalry, followed by a wagon, where, under a tricolour flag, lay the body of Beaurepaire. Next came the volunteer battalions, the regular corps of the French army bringing up the rear. Three thousand five hundred men filed out on that grey morning in silence and shame, victims not so much of their own pusillanimity as of a treachery that was to repeat itself, on a far larger scale, eighty years later in a fortress not very far south of Verdun.

A legend concerning this portion of Marceau's life, and told in all gravity by most of his biographers, may be disposed of here. The story runs that as the Prussian cavalry escort turned bridle to return to Verdun and passed the volunteer battalions, Marceau cried out in defiance : " Adieu, till we meet again on the plains of Champagne ! " The character of Marceau, the gloom that must have reigned in all hearts, and especially in his, at this

moment, are sufficient to dissipate the gossamer of which this story is woven, a story more worthy of some braggart of war than of a brave soldier in the hour of his humiliation.

The French troops had been ordered to take the direction of Ste. Menehould, in rear of the Argonne forest, where they were to join the Army of the North under Dumouriez. After the Prussian cavalry returned to Verdun the retreating French troops got mixed up, and were soon stricken with panic. Following, not the example of the Irish mercenaries present, but the dictates of their own hearts, the volunteer battalions disbanded themselves on the march, and many of the soldier-citizens took the road to Epernay. The commanders could exercise no authority, as the different regiments had become hopelessly intermixed. Among those who fled to Epernay were three hundred volunteers belonging to the Eure-and-Loir. In vain Marceau begged and commanded, argued and threatened, there was no stopping their flight ; they succeeded in taking with them even some of the choicest of his troop of Chasseurs. Nor was order restored until Galbaud, who had been sent to reinforce Verdun, was met. The combined forces then retreated to the pass of Les Islettes, the garrison of Verdun passing through it to Ste. Menehould.

Marceau makes the barest allusion to these events in his journal. "The stress of war," he says, "took me to Verdun, and thence to the army of General Dillon."

In a letter to Constantine Maugars, written on

the 7th September from the Bois du Courrupt, where he was posted after reaching Ste. Menchould, Marceau comments on the conduct of the inhabitants of Verdun, and on the treachery of those who so readily agreed to the capitulation. It is only in a postscript of two lines that he refers, as though the words burnt him as he wrote them, to the part he had been forced to take in that unhappy affair: "It was I who went to the camp of the King of Prussia and arranged the articles of the capitulation."

The letter, though so reticent on this point, does not fail to inform Maugars of the later conduct of the volunteers of their department: "The battalion of the Eure-and-Loir," writes Marceau, "which during the siege had given some proofs of courage, has just disgraced itself, and shown to all France how little she can rely on her volunteers. Three hundred cowards have not long since deserted their colours, moved thereto either by fear or the desire to return to their homes. . . . Oh! my friend, you cannot think how it cuts me to the heart to speak thus of my fellow-citizens, and how it grieves me to have to admit to you that I regret they ever thought me worthy of leading them. How unfortunate is the man who is compelled by his position to endure evils which he cannot remedy. This is my case; compelled as I am to serve by profession, and at the same time to endure the pain of seeing insubordination rampant in our army. The friend of liberty, and therefore of order, I cannot without grief see its progress impeded by those who should rely on example alone. I blush to have to admit that our

troops are more feared than the enemy. It is to be hoped that this state of affairs will not last long, otherwise France will be brought to the verge of ruin, and will find herself deserted by all officers and men who now love her and desire her welfare. I shall be of this number. Compelled by necessity to remain here, I prefer poverty to ignominy, and I would rather that men said of me 'Marceau was virtuous, and he was no coward.' To work for a livelihood will be more tolerable to me than to see the possessions of virtuous citizens plundered and pillaged without having the power to prevent it. I prefer honour to riches, and poverty to infamy."

"The friend of liberty, and therefore of order!"—"I prefer honour to riches!" Well may one of Marceau's biographers<sup>1</sup> exclaim at the simplicity and depth of these phrases, coming as they do from the pen of one so young and thrown without a guide, except that of an upright heart, into the wilderness of a revolution such as that of 1789.

<sup>1</sup> M. Maze.

## CHAPTER IV.

*The Thermopylæ of France—General Dillon—Valmy and Les Islettes—Transfer to the Germanic Legion—Cantoned in Chartres—Arrest and trial.*

THE capitulation of Verdun was naturally interpreted in Paris as an act of base treachery and undisguised treason. The National Convention at once decreed that all officers who had voted for it should be placed on trial. The decree exempted by name, among others, Marceau, who, as the decree stated, had showed an example of courage and patriotism under trying circumstances. Commandant Neyon, who had been thought fit to fill Beaurepaire's place, and whose first act had been to agree to the terms dictated by the enemy, was sentenced to death and guillotined.

The troops who had formed the garrison of Verdun, including the Eure-and-Loir battalions, were placed under General Dillon and formed part of his division. Dillon commanded the left wing of Dumouriez's army of the Ardennes, and defended at this time La Chalade and Les Islettes, the two southernmost passes of the Argonne forest.

Dumouriez, who when the allied armies entered France by way of Longwy and Verdun, was at

Sedan with 25,000 men, had conceived the grand plan of retreating before the superior forces of the Allies and defending the Argonne. At the council of war, pointing to the forest on the map, he said to one of his officers: "That is the Thermopylæ of France."

This forest of Argonne extends from the vicinity of Sedan some fifteen leagues south-west to Passavant. It is only three to four leagues wide, but, owing to the roughness of the ground and the numerous woods, watercourses, and uplands to be threaded or crossed, is only penetrable by an army through a few defiles, such as an inferior force might easily fortify and defend. These defiles, commencing from the north, are named respectively: Chêne-Populeux, near Sedan, Croix-aux-Bois, Grand Pré, La Chalade, and Les Islettes. The last-named defile opens opposite Verdun, and through it passes the great road that connects that fortress with Ste. Menchould, Chalons, and Paris. To the east of the Argonne lies the rich and fertile country of the Trois-Évêchés; to the west are the sterile and muddy plains of the Champagne province.

Through the Trois-Évêchés and parallel to the Argonne range, at a distance of three to five leagues, runs the river Meuse, both banks of which, from Stenay to Verdun, were now occupied by the formidable forces of the Allies.

To occupy the Argonne passes it was therefore necessary to make a flank march along the front of the allied army. But Dumouriez, whose genius resembled in some respects that of Napoleon, never



doubted of success. Ordering Beurnonville to support him on the left at Rethel, and Kellermann on the right from Bar-le-Duc, he commenced this movement on the 1st September, 1792. Dillon, marching between the Argonne and the Meuse, led the way, and after driving the Austrians back over the Meuse, occupied, on the 4th, La Chalade and Les Islettes. Dumouriez himself had reached Grand Pré the day before, and by the 7th the other two defiles were taken possession of and the road to Paris secured.

It will be seen how important was the task intrusted to Dillon; and Marceau with his regiment was ordered to join the advance guard of Dillon's division, his camp being fixed in the Bois du Courrupt, south of Les Islettes.

Dumouriez wrote to the Convention informing it that he had occupied the Argonne, and asked that reinforcements and supplies should be sent to Chalons in his rear. "Grand Pré and Les Islettes," he added, "are our Thermopylæ; but I shall be more fortunate than Leonidas."

On the 10th September a general attack was made all along the line by the Allies on the French outposts before the five defiles, but it was everywhere successfully repulsed. At La Chalade and Les Islettes Dillon had to bear the brunt of the Prussian attack, never, however, very skilfully directed or seriously maintained.

On the 15th, the Austrians under Clerfayt succeeded in forcing Croix-aux-Bois, the second of the five passes, which Dumouriez, misinformed of its

importance, had failed to guard with a sufficient force. In a day the French Thermopylæ was turned ; Dumouriez's position, from one of strength and security, became one of extreme danger, and the road to Chalons and Paris was open.

Dumouriez's genius did not forsake him at this critical hour. On the 17th he fell back from Grand Pré to Ste. Menehould du Roi on the Aisne, and took up a new position, with his face to the Champagne and his back to the Argonne forest he had abandoned. The pivot of this manœuvre was Dillon's division, which still maintained itself at La Chalade and Les Islettes, and formed the impregnable right of the French army, the other wing of which now rested on Dampierre and the Aune.

On the 19th, Beurnonville and Kellermann joined Dumouriez, raising his force to 70,000 men. Kellermann had been ordered to occupy Gisancourt on the left ; but, misunderstanding the order, he passed on to the low hill of Valmy, nearer the centre and opposite the heights of La Lune.

The forces of the Allies, pouring through the now unoccupied passes, soon came up with the French. Their object was to make themselves masters of the road to Chalons, to force the two defiles defended by Dillon, to extend their right as far as Vitry, and thus surround Ste. Menehould and crush the combined armies of Dumouriez and Kellermann.

On the 20th September took place the "Canonade of Valmy," which it is not to our purpose to give in detail. It was an indecisive action fought

between the Prussians, under Brunswick, occupying the heights of La Lune, and the left centre of the French army at Valmy under Kellermann. Some 20,000 cannon shots were fired, the bulk of the forces on either side was never employed; each side maintained its position and claimed a victory, and the combined losses did not exceed 1,700 or 1,800 in killed and wounded.

Whatever the cause of the failure of the Prussians to carry the inferior position of the French, certain it is that Valmy was claimed as a victory by the Republicans, and proved the turning point in the campaign of 1792.

It was a great moral victory. It gave to the French army a self-confidence previously lacking, and a prestige which enabled it in the future to endure defeat with equanimity, as well as to win great battles in the name of the Republic. To quote the words of Goethe, who was present at Valmy: "From this place, and from this day forth, commences a new era in the world's history."

We left Marceau in his camp in the Bois du Courrupt. The prospect of the coming battle, and the return of nearly all the deserters from his corps, soon made him forget his past misfortunes. He forgave his compatriots, and devoted his time and energy to the reorganization of his battalion. How far he and his brother officers succeeded, may be gathered from the fact that his battalion was soon after considered sufficiently disciplined to form part of the advance guard of Dillon's army of 8,000 men defending La Chalade and Les Islettes.

Marceau, with Dillon's advance guard, could not have taken part, as many of his biographers have stated, in the cannonade of Valmy, unless we consider three attacks made on Les Islettes at about the same time as part of that action. These attacks by a strong detachment of the Allies on that important pass, on which rested the back and right of the French army, were sustained and defeated by the bravery and obstinate courage of the regulars and volunteers under Dillon. And it was at Les Islettes, the true Thermopylæ of France, the defile that bars the road to Chalons and Paris, that Marceau first experienced the joys of battle, and distinguished himself in the forefront of the fight and in the eyes of his commander. From this day until he left the army of the Ardennes, Marceau was attached as an aide-de-camp to Dillon's staff. Marceau, still in the Bois du Courrupt, wrote to his friend Maugars on the 24th September, and it is clear from this letter that the "two affairs" he there mentions do not include Valmy, which is alluded to further on in the same letter :

"There has been, my dear friend, a long interval between this letter and my last. But there has been a reason for the delay, namely, frequent marches, and two affairs in which I commanded 200 men. Our general, Dillon, who is a good patriot, and, what is more, a fine soldier, has twice with the advanced guard, composed of 8,000 or 9,000 men, repulsed the enemy before us, numbering about 8,000. I was intrusted with the pursuit of the fugitives, whom I followed up to their very en-

trenchments without other loss than that of two chasseurs of a Frank company. The enemy's main forces, numbering 48,000, penetrated into the Champagne, but our brave general, Dumouriez, held them in check by taking up an advantageous position with 17,000 men only. In his repulse of their attacks he displayed both talent and firmness. He was forced to fall back so as to place himself in touch with the reinforcements he expected, but his retreat was as clever as that of Turenne.

“But how can I tell you of the cowards, and traitors, and scoundrels withal, who, though they call themselves Frenchmen, have merely the name, and who in this retreat have very nearly lost us both our empire and our liberty. Some 1,500 of the enemy's hussars followed up the retreat in the hope of plunder. Admirable order reigned during the march, when suddenly the scoundrels alluded to quitted the ranks, crying out they were betrayed and cut off. A portion of the army was thrown into disorder, and it needed all the genius of the general to prevent the panic from creating a disaster. He took up a good position, nearer to us, and was presently joined by Generals Kellermann and Beurnonville. The next day there was a cannonade of twelve hours, in which we lost 115 killed, and about 600 wounded, the greater part seriously. The enemy must have suffered heavily from our fire. During the last two days there have been frequent skirmishes. The enemy's advance guard is two miles from Chalons. Lückner is said to be not far off that town with 32,000 federates, or

say, rather, scoundrels, who are only men in name, and through whom we shall be lost if they are not brought to order. They pillage everything and murder everyone whom they fall out with. By so acting they think to show how brave they are ; and yet the cowards refused for four days to march to our succour. They wish to conquer without fighting, and to live as well here as they did in Paris. As for us, devoted as we are to the public cause, we despise those who know no other master than their own will, and we shall use all the force in our power to bring them to order. For three days we have been without bread, as the convoys have had to make a detour to avoid the enemy. *Sed pro patria pati oportet.* I have little else to tell you. Your brothers are flourishing, and so am I. Write and tell us the names of our young friends and acquaintances who have left Chartres, what posts they hold, and where they have gone to, for I do not think any have joined our army. These little things often escape us, and when we speak of friends, you know what that means. Make time if you have none ; sleep less, and while we keep watch and ward over the safety of the empire, you do the same over the tender friendship that is thine."

The letter mentions two actions before the defiles defended by Dillon, and then the retreat of Dumouriez to a position in rear of Les Islettes. The panic referred to occurred twice during Dumouriez's change of front from Grand Pré to Ste. Meneshould. The second *sauve qui peut* was a serious one, as more than 1,500 men escaped to

Chalons, spreading everywhere the tale of the utter destruction of the Army of the North. All, however, was retrieved by the efforts and the calm assurance of Dumouriez and his generals, and the moral victory of Valmy followed.

But let us read and re-read this letter of Marceau's, so beautiful in its simple gravity. *Sed pro patria pati oportet.* "These words," says Hippolyte Maze, "depict him faithfully. Though he seeks a refuge in the army, the life of a soldier has no fascination for him. The faults and the blunders he witnesses grieve him sorely. The thought of duty alone sustains him. He consoles himself by pouring out the thoughts of his heart to his friends, and he closes his letter by calling to mind the noblest words of Roman antiquity."

The last days of September arrived. The fine army of the Allies posted before Ste. Menchould and Les Islettes began to melt away under scarcity and disease, and on the 30th the retreat began. Dumouriez directed his generals to pursue and destroy the enemy, and then betook himself to Paris. He ordered Dillon to advance by Clermont and Varennes, and cut off the road to Verdun, and Dillon alone of all the generals carried out his orders in a proper spirit. So impetuous was his pursuit that, on one occasion, he nearly brought on an engagement with the entire Prussian army. Before long Verdun was retaken, and it must have been with mixed feelings of joy and regret that Marceau re-entered the fortress whose base betrayal he had so unwillingly witnessed. By the end of

October the Allies had entirely evacuated French territory.

We must sum up here the rest of the campaign of 1792, as we shall have to return to this frontier with Marceau after the Vendean interval of almost eighteen months.

After the retreat of the Allies, Dumouriez again turned his attention to Flanders. On the 6th November he fought and won the battle of Jemappes, which led to the conquest of the whole of the Netherlands south of Antwerp. This city, too, was occupied, and the navigation of the Scheldt opened to free commerce. The French army then advanced on to the Rhine to meet Custine at Coblenz, and took up its winter quarters at Roermond, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Namur. On the Rhine, meanwhile, Custine had taken Speyer, Worms, and Frankenthal, and on the 21st October occupied Mayence, the key to the western provinces of the empire, and the only fortified post of the Allies on the Rhine. The Duke of Brunswick, alarmed at Custine's progress, moved with all his forces against him, and compelled him to recross the Rhine and take up a position for the winter between Bingen and Frankenthal, with a garrison at Mayence.

In these events Marceau unfortunately took no part, for, after the allied armies had retreated beyond Longwy and Thionville, he accompanied Dillon, who had been suspended and recalled to Paris. This unfortunate general, Count Arthur Dillon, was seized by the revolutionary tribunal of Paris, and, in spite of the services he had rendered to the Republic,



guillotined on the 13th April, 1793. Again, under conditions which prognosticate no good to himself, does Marceau lose the chief he has faithfully served, and whose respect and admiration he had won. "I became intimate with this general," he says in his diary ; "he certainly had more talent than manners, but I endeavoured to profit by the former to the best of my ability." That Marceau was much attached to Dillon is evident from his accompanying him to Paris, where he not only prepared his defence for him, but exerted himself with influential friends, such as Brissot and Pétion, so as to place his general's conduct in its true light before the tribunal. His efforts were, however, in vain, and he only compromised himself by his connection with one who, however unjustly, was condemned as a royalist and a traitor. His sister, Emira, whom he often saw during his visit to Paris, warned him of his danger, and found an excuse for his leaving Paris before the guillotine could claim him for a victim.

Marceau's health had suffered much from the constant exposure of a long campaign ; but, moved by his sister's entreaties to quit Paris, and urgently pressed to rejoin his corps, he had already made up his mind to do both, when he was offered, and at once accepted, a first lieutenancy in the Light Cuirassiers of the Germanic Legion.

Acting on the advice of Emira, he had applied to be employed in the regular army, and had been nominated a sub-lieutenant in the 83rd Regiment. He justly thought, however, that his qualifications

and services entitled him to a better recognition, and the letter he wrote from the Bois de Courupt to the Chartres municipality, asking them for their intervention, deserves to be quoted for the directness and modesty with which he puts forward his claims :

“ Dear fellow-citizens, I have received from the citizen minister of war a letter wherein he informs me that I have been nominated a sub-lieutenant in the 83rd infantry regiment. I have no doubt that I owe this partly to your recommendation, but will you allow me to remark that a sub-lieutenancy of infantry is not what I thought I had the right to expect from the justice of the citizen minister. I venture to hope, from the interest you have taken in me, that you will be pleased to represent that I can reckon eight years of honourable service both in the Line and in the National Guard ; and that in the latter, through the suffrages of my fellow-citizens, I have served in a high grade. . . . Elected lieutenant-colonel by my comrades, and having served for five months in this grade, the minister, who is a just man and a patriot, cannot, I think, resist the just demands of a soldier who, ever since the declaration of war, has acted a part in it under the eyes of generals in a manner which won their esteem and always at the most perilous posts.”

In his journal he has told us his reasons for wishing to join the cavalry, and the steps he took to that end. “ The love of glory,” he confesses, “ had taken the place of all other passions in me. The nature of the studies I had long devoted myself to had

enlarged my views. After due reflection I resolved, instead of rejoining my corps, to serve in the cavalry, in order that I might have a wider acquaintance with both arms of the service. I therefore asked for a letter from the minister Pache. He refused it, but offered me, at the same time, the post of captain, which I accepted."

The promptings of Emira, who now plainly saw of what stuff her brother was made, had as much to do with this inclination and the subsequent appointment as any desire of Marceau's to move forward in the path of glory. The brevet-captaincy was certainly obtained from Pache by the intervention of Conventionnel Sergent, an engraver by profession and the friend of Emira, who became his wife after her divorce from the obnoxious Champion de Cernel.

The Light Cuirassiers to whom Marceau was appointed formed part of the foreign or Germanic Legion. This corps was raised in 1792 by a decree of the Legislative Assembly, and reorganized by Westermann from soldiers trained in the regular wars on the Rhenish frontier. It consisted of some four or five thousand men, of whom one-third were light cavalry, and the remainder infantry, or *fantassins*. Marceau joined the corps in 1792, his sister Emira again coming to his assistance, by providing the somewhat expensive and brilliant uniform and equipment of an officer—the helmet of burnished steel, the silver-plated cuirass, the horse with its costly trappings and modernized coat of mail. The German Legion, when Marceau first joined it, existed, however, to a great extent on paper, but it was

being rapidly brought up to full strength by the admission of discontents, deserters, and foreigners. The attempt to weld these elements into a compact disciplined body brought considerable trouble on the unfortunate officers, including Marceau, to whom the difficult task was intrusted.

The cantonments of this mongrel corps were at Fontainebleau, Orleans, Chartres, La Flèche, and other places, with headquarters at Philippeville. Marceau appears, from his journal, to have been first quartered, with a detachment of his cuirassiers, at his native place, Chartres, and there enjoyed two months of rest, so necessary to him in his state of health. "Here," he says, "I remained two months, which were not marked by any great event; on the contrary, this monotonous and peaceful existence, where I was so happy, seemed to reveal to me that all my passions had now been stilled and stifled. I say this because the passion for glory I had felt some little time before tormented me no longer, and because death, that had carried off the youthful object of my affection, seemed to have extinguished for ever the love that I had experienced. Happy days! Why did you not endure, or rather why, yielding to circumstances and the advice of friends, did it enter into my mind to leave a place where life would have been tranquil and peaceful! I enjoyed excellent health, and I was not devoured by a thousand cares, one only more cruel than another. What had I then done to the kind Heaven to be so unfortunate? But we must needs follow our destiny, and I must resume my sketch."

The two months at Chartres were, indeed, the period of calm that precedes the storm, a storm that tore away the root-strings of Marceau's heart. But to the hour of his glorious death he braved it manfully, and his belief in humanity, in a future of peace, in the justice of the great cause in whose armies he fought, was never shaken by its blasts. If you live among men, it has been said, the heart must either break or turn to brass. Marceau, full of hope, and courageous to the last, did not, perhaps, live long enough to discover, or to illustrate the truth of this aphorism.

The first trouble arose from the soldiers of the German Legion. We have seen what was the composition of this corps. Deserters from other regiments and other countries, adventurers from Paris, filled with the insubordinate spirit of the metropolis, were an element of disorder in the corps, and could not brook the submission required of them to the authority of their officers. A large body of these would-be soldiers now charged the latter with treachery, and conduct unbecoming patriots and citizens. These vague charges, together with their grievances, were laid before the bar of the National Convention early in the year 1793. This assembly appointed three delegates, Bourbotte, Julien of Toulouse, and Bourdon, to hold an inquiry into the matter, and to place under arrest all whose conduct appeared to them unworthy or unpatriotic.

The delegates summoned before them at Philippeville twenty-five officers from among those who had been foremost in maintaining order among the

troops, and improving the discipline of the corps. Marceau, as might have been expected, was of the number so summoned, and, though still suffering, was obliged to travel from Chartres to Philippeville, to appear before the Triumvirs of reform and revenge. Augereau and Westermann were also among the twenty-five. From Philippeville these unfortunate men were conducted to Tours, where the delegates now established themselves, so as to be nearer the Orleans battalions, who were the principal accusers.

At Tours, in the Place d'Armes, surrounded by troops and a gaping crowd, these twenty-five brave men were ordered by the delegates to surrender their swords. All refused, and not a few protested loudly, until Marceau stepped forward, with a proud and dignified air, and presented his weapon to the representatives of the government. The small band was immediately surrounded by a military escort, and conducted to the Tours prison, where they were kept confined in cells.

Here Marceau might have remained until the advent of Napoleon, or some other restorer of order, had it not been for the energy and wisdom of his sister Emira, who once more came to his aid. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that, but for her timely intervention, Marceau, in spite of his services and his innocence, would have added one more to the number of those, who, like Dillon, Custine, Houchard, and a host of others, though they had fought valiantly for the Republic, were sacrificed to the howling, insatiable mob by the

irresponsible and bloodthirsty tribunals of Paris. For innocence and faithful service were no more safeguards in those days than they had been in Flanders during the tyranny of Alva and his fiendish master. As in the case of the victims of the Flemish Inquisition, the guilt of those suspected, or even named, was a foregone conclusion, and the judge went through the formality of a trial with the death-warrant already signed, sealed, and delivered to him.

The terrible days of May were, moreover, now at hand. Girondist and Jacobin were waging their war of mutual extermination. The wave of insurrection swept the land. It is quite possible, therefore, that Marceau might have been forgotten in his dungeon, or taken and kept a prisoner by those very royalists he had been preparing to meet in arms.

Emira, escaping with difficulty from Paris, hastened to Tours with her friend, the engraver Sergent, now a member of the National Convention. Three weeks of imprisonment, and all the ingratitude and injustice that had been Marceau's sole reward, must have almost broken the heart of one gifted with so fine a sense of right and wrong, and at the same time so great a prey to melancholy.

After a short stay at Tours, Emira and Sergent hastened to Saumur, where the representatives of the people were then holding their court, and simultaneously conducting the campaign against the rebels. Sergent demanded and obtained permission from his colleagues that Marceau should be

forthwith summoned before them, and examined as to the imputations made against him. Bourbotte alone resented this act of justice.

Choudieu was appointed president, with Bourbotte public prosecutor, and Richard, Bourdon, Tallien, Goupilleau, Julien of Toulouse, and Caux as members of the tribunal.

Marceau was transferred in custody to Saumur, and the trial was proceeded with rapidly. A memoir dealing with his services, supported by affidavits as to its correctness, collected by the untiring Emira, was placed before the court by Sergent. The prosecutor failed to bring home to the accused any one of the charges on which he had been arrested and imprisoned. Marceau conducted his own defence "with simplicity and rare modesty," says M. Parfait. "During his examination not a complaint escaped his lips, not even an indirect recrimination of his enemies. He either disdained them or desired to forget them." Representative Goupilleau of Fontenay, who saw and heard Marceau for the first time, could not help exclaiming: "If this officer, whom I now see for the first time, and whose manner of defending himself I appreciate and admire, is not as staunch a republican as he is a brave soldier, I shall never place faith in any man again!"

Judgment was passed on the 8th June, 1793. The Commission declared Marceau to be absolutely guiltless, and acquitted him with honour, and ordered that he should be reinstated as captain in the German Legion, and his sword and horse



restored to him. This was almost the unanimous verdict of the judges, of whom Bourbotte alone abstained from voting. We shall see by what means Marceau heaped coals of fire on the head of this persistent enemy.

Marceau's comments on his incarceration are worth extracting from his journal : " For one entire month," he records, " I was treated as a malefactor, and confined in a dark and unwholesome prison-house. A memoir placed before the Committee of Public Welfare, and the interest my friends took in my case, at last secured me my liberty. As indemnity and by way of recompense, I received the grade of lieutenant-colonel. But can the unhappy victim of injustice ever be indemnified, and can any recompense atone for that injustice? I reflected long on this subject, and in the end I did all I could in my new grade, which I at first refused, but was compelled finally to accept, to restore to my corps that discipline which the arrest of its principal officers had destroyed."

With his transfer to the German Legion and to the seat of the war of La Vendée, Marceau took leave of the department of the Eure-and-Loir, and the battalion raised from within its borders. He had suffered much, for the sting of injustice is sharp, and the pangs of ingratitude burn like fire. But there was reserved to this sensitive and intense soul a torture more refined still, and more lasting, than even these instruments could inflict. We shall see how like a hero of old time Marceau bore himself in this conflict with an untoward world.



## PART II.

### LA VENDÉE.

*“In this part of La Vendée the Republic certainly gets the upper hand. But which Republic, for in this triumph the Republic assumes two forms? There is the Republic of Terror that would fain conquer through severity; and the Republic of Mercy, whose methods are clemency and forbearance. Which of these is destined to succeed? These two forms, the conciliatory and the implacable, has each a representative exercising his particular sway and armed with a distinct authority, the military commander, namely, and the civil delegate. To which of these will it be given to prevail? Of the two, the delegate has formidable powers to support him, for he comes armed with the menacing order of the Paris commune, ‘No mercy! no quarter!’ . . . The other, the soldier, possesses but one source of power, that which emanates from the exercise of humanity and pity.”—VICTOR HUGO.*



## CHAPTER I.

*La Vendée—The country and its inhabitants—The civil war of La Vendée—Defence of Saumur—Bourbotte.*

MARCEAU regained his freedom on the 8th of June, 1793, and on the following day, having already hurried his sister Emira and her friend Sergent out of Saumur, he was called upon to resume his place in the Republican army as Captain of Cuirassiers of the German Legion, and to defend the town against the attack of the Royalist army of La Vendée.

This brings us at once to the second portion of Marceau's military career, and his connection with the civil war in the west of France.

He did not now draw his sword to arrest the march of an invading foreign foe, but to suppress an insurrection of his own countrymen, whose object it was to restore royalty at the expense of the new Republic, of which he was an avowed and ardent soldier.

It was his fortune to initiate, at the chateau of La Tremblaie, and on the heights above Cholet, the ruin of the Royalist cause, and, at Le Mans and Savenay, to deal the final blow to its once invincible army. But in giving the story of these triumphs

we must not be understood to say that they are for us, or were for Marceau, a subject for gratulation or self-glorification. Though we find him ever in the forefront of the fight, manfully doing battle with the enemies of the Republic, there is no note of exultation, and no desire or fulfilment of ambition based on the slaughter of his countrymen, or arising out of the smoking ruins of their chateaux and cabins.

The words of the Royalist leader, when he first went out to join the insurgents, would have found a ready response in Marceau's heart. "We must never expect human glory," said Bonchamps to his weeping wife ; "civil strife affords none."

The insurrection in La Vendée is one of the most momentous events in the history of the French Revolution. Someone has compared it to a rising of the ancient Gauls at the voice of the Druids and led by their great chiefs. But Victor Hugo was nearer the truth when he said that two words, country (*pays*) and fatherland (*patrie*), entirely summed up the war of La Vendée ; that it was the strife of the local idea with the universal, of peasants *versus* patriots.

La Vendée militant, that is, the La Vendée that took up arms, was not an extensive tract of country. It covered an area of 1,100 square miles, and may be said to have been bounded, approximately, on the north by the Loire from Nantes to Saumur ; on the east by a line running from Saumur through Thouars and Parthenay to Niort ; south by the road that connects Niort with Sables-d'Olonne on

the sea-coast ; and west by the Bay of Biscay. It comprised the greater portion of the departments of La Vendée and the Deux-Sèvres, three-tenths of the Loire-Inférieure, and two-fifths of the Maine-et-Loire, thus embracing a part of each of the old provinces of Poitou and Anjou, and of the County of Nantes. Within this area there were, in 1793, ten arrondissements and six hundred communes, with a total population of 720,000 souls.

We shall better understand the sublime and desperate nature of the struggle, in which Marceau played so prominent a part, when we realize that of this population only one-fifth joined the insurrection ; that this force, not exceeding 150,000 men, and divided into five irregular armies, had at one time arrayed against it 200,000 soldiers of the Line and of the National Guards, including some of the flower of the French regular army ; that, notwithstanding this, the struggle was maintained with vigour and success through a period of at least a year, during which veteran armies were vanquished over and over again, and the road to Paris twice cleared for an unopposed march of the Catholic armies. It was only when the wounded animal was driven from its lair by a formidable and systematic attack, when La Vendée had been abandoned in her smoke and ashes, and 130,000 of all sexes and sizes had perished, that victory declared itself for the arms of the Republic. Even then the Vendean army, most terrible when it stood at bay and in its death-throes, only succumbed through divided counsels and unavoidable misfortunes rather

than to the force of arms or to superior military skill and valour.

The reason of this protracted success of the ill-armed and undisciplined bands of La Vendée will become plain when we learn the peculiar conformation and aspect of the country which was the seat of the struggle, and the character of its inhabitants.

La Vendée, as it then existed, may best be described as a large labyrinth without roads, or as a vast fortress where nature had provided all that was needed to maintain a successful resistance. Dumouriez, in traversing La Vendée shortly before the outbreak, had said: "If I had to wage civil war, it is here I should come." This country, for the most part a wilderness, where agriculture consisted chiefly in the culture of rye and buckwheat, is divided by nature into three distinct parts, known severally as the *Bocage*, the *Marais*, and the *Plain*.

The *Bocage* or *Gatine*, occupying more or less the centre, is an assemblage of small mountains and of high hills, which are now linked together in a chain and now cut and cross each other, forming a multitude of valleys, giving birth to numerous streams, and pouring their waters into three or four rivers: the Thouet, the Sèvre-Nantaise, the Lay, and the Sèvre-Niortaise. The *Bocage* comprised some 560 square miles of the insurgent country. It was covered, as its name implies, by numerous forests of oak, chestnut, and beech, either disposed in masses on hillside and valley, or surrounding the enclosures of the scattered small farms of the *métayer*, or lining the deep water-courses which often, in the absence of



roads, afforded the only means of communication between one parish and another. The rough-hewn hills, with cataracts pouring down their sides, the innumerable streams with their steep shaggy banks that stray eccentrically through them, the quickset hedges which enclose each isolated property and prevent a view of human habitations, the roads far below the level of the land through which they run, all combine to give the country a severe and savage aspect. This *Bocage*, with its stony soil but pure air, its difficult roadways but aged oaks; these great Vendean woods with their mystery, their solitude, and their tragic and sinister beauties, were the very centre, the fostering hearth of the great civil war.

As you descend from the mountains and leave behind you the last slopes of the hills, and traverse the plains nearer the sea, the scene changes; the waters seem to flow no longer, and the ground declines till it terminates in salt marshes, and is everywhere cut up by a multitude of canals, which render access almost impossible. We have come to the *Marais*, or marshland, covering some 135,000 hectares of wet, dry, and salt marshes. There were two extents of marshland, the one lying south of Luçon and Fontenay, and stretching from La Gironde to Talmont; the other bordering the ocean from Saint-Gilles to the Loire. This flat, marshy country was a worse labyrinth even than the *Bocage*, where an invading army could lose itself or be cut to pieces in detachments.

The rest of the country may be included in the

*Plain*, which was better cultivated than either the *Bocage* or the *Marais*, though less wooded than the former, and where the houses were grouped into villages, presenting a more homely and human aspect than either of these.

Thus of the 1,100 square miles over which the insurrection spread, fifty per cent. may be called the *Bocage*, and eight per cent. marshland; the remainder consisted of plains, dunes, islands, and lakelets.

Before the advent of Napoleon only three practicable roads traversed the country. One from the Sables-d'Olonne to Nantes, passing through Palluau and Legé; another from the Sables to Niort, through Luçon and Fontenay; while a third connected Nantes with Fontenay by way of Montaigu, Chantonnay, and Sainte-Hermione through the heart of the *Bocage*.

Within this area there were no manufactories and no great towns. Niort had a population of 7,000, all the others were only large villages, of 2,000 to 3,000 souls. The population in these favoured the Republic, and did not, as a rule, join in the Vendean revolt. Whether in town or in country there were few of those magnificent chateaux to be found in most other parts of France. The land was cultivated by *métayers*, who divided the produce of their small farms with the proprietors. The wealth of the country was in its cattle, and the inhabitants trusted more to this source than to the land for their sustenance.

The Vendéans were all either shepherds or agriculturists, and it was only by a sad destiny that they

were called upon to be soldiers. Their mode of life was simple, their customs almost patriarchal. They loved their chiefs, who lived and died in the midst of them, while the system of sharing profits and produce formed the strongest bond, that of common material interests, between the landlord and his tenants. The people were strongly religious, and closely attached to their village pastors, who were a reflex of the people, and men of extraordinary purity of character.

The pale-faced, dark-haired Vendean of the woods and the uplands, with his sad and gloomy mien, was an ignorant credulous creature, slow of spirit and fondly attached to his native soil, but impatient of authority, and capable of the most sublime heroism, and of an almost mystic devotion when roused to defend his hearth or the religion of his forefathers.

The dweller in the plains, the child of the Loire, or the grenadier of La Vendée, as he has been called, did not live in such isolation, and was in consequence more civilized and intelligent, and of a more robust and sociable disposition than his brother of the woods and waters.

The toiler in the *Marais* was a large, fair-haired man as a rule, full of enthusiasm, but without energy or vigour to support it.

All, however, had a strong religious faith and an unconquerable attachment to ancient habits. While their faults, which were those of ignorance and credulity, closed the door to them against the reception of the new revolutionary ideas, a mystic resignation made them irresistible in the hour of battle.

It is almost superfluous to say that such a people were in favour of the ancient monarchy, and opposed to the French revolution with its iron level, and that it is to the resistance offered to this revolution, which produced a profound agitation throughout La Vendée, that the beginnings of the civil war must be attributed.

The persecution of the nobles and of the clergy, who never actually fomented the intestine quarrel, by the democratic party, was undoubtedly one of the great causes which led to civil war, while the levy of 300,000 men ordered by the National Convention in February, 1793, was the firebrand that inflamed in a few days the entire country south of the Loire.

“Everywhere,” says the historian, “the insurrection bore the same character ; the indignities offered to the clergy were its exciting cause ; and a mixture of courage and devotion its peculiar character.”

The first spark was kindled near Vannes in Morbihan. In February, 1790, the peasants rose in consequence of the severities practised against their pastors, who had been removed because they refused to take the revolutionary oaths and to submit to the new circumscription of the churches. This led to the churches being abandoned, and to assemblies in the woods for prayer, and so to conflicts with the National Guards, by whom the peasants were finally dispersed with much slaughter. In May, 1791, another abortive insurrection broke out in Lower Poitou, and in parts of Anjou, and was suppressed with the same severity.

Now occurred the flight of Louis XVI., and his return to Paris as a prisoner of the people. This inflamed the hearts of the Royalists of the west, and led to the famous conspiracy of the nobles of Brittany and Normandy in alliance with the refugees at Coblenz and in the Channel Islands, and the promise of succour from England. The Marquis de la Rouarie was the soul of this vast conspiracy, which had for its object the restoration of the throne and the rescue of the country from the oppressive yoke of the demagogues, and the death of this nobleman in January, 1792, proved an irreparable loss to the Royalists, and prevented that simultaneous action on both banks of the Loire which it was his object to secure. The conspiracy was discovered, and twelve noblemen of Brittany were guillotined at Rennes. The Royalists, left without leaders, were dispersed, and order restored once more with the usual accompaniment of burning chateaux, ruined homes, and wholesale arrests and slaughter of nobles, priests, and peasants.

But from the ashes of this great conspiracy arose the living flame of insurrection which soon enveloped the whole of the west of France. "Three months after the death of La Rouarie, the extraordinary levy ordered by the National Convention, the ill-treatment of the clergy, the excesses of the patriot Vendéans and of the employés of government, the sudden removal of all commercial intercourse, caused a general insurrection to break out. The peasants, wounded alike through their material interests and their religion, and seduced by the party

most interested in their revolt, compelled the nobles to place themselves at their head.”<sup>1</sup>

The attempt to force the obnoxious levy of men in March, 1793, occasioned a general resistance, which broke out without any previous concert at the same time over the whole of the four most western departments south of the Loire. The tocsin sounded and the inhabitants of 600 communes rose as one man. We will summarize as briefly as possible the events of the war up to the attack on Saumur on the day after Marceau's release from the dungeon-house of that town.

The principal points of revolt were Saint-Florent, in Anjou, where Cathelineau, a Vendean pedlar and wool-dealer, defeated the Republicans, and Chatillon, in Poitou.

In March, Cholet, in Anjou, was taken by the peasants, and before Easter 50,000 men were in a state of insurrection throughout La Vendée.

And now appeared on the scene the chiefs, who were hitherto wanting to the people. Some came forward of their own free will ; others were torn from their castles and compelled by their tenantry to lead them to battle.

The insurgent forces came to be amalgamated into three or more distinct armies, which, with their leaders, we must briefly notice here. First, there was the Army of Upper Vendée, otherwise known as *the Grand Army*. It could muster at need 50,000 men, and comprised all the insurgent parishes between the Sèvre-Nantaise and the Loire.

<sup>1</sup> Savany.

Its chiefs were the noble-hearted Bonchamps, who with La Rochejaquelein may be regarded as the heroes of La Vendée; Stofflet and d'Elbée, both ex-officers; Lescure, *the Saint of Poitou*, and first husband of the author of those vivid memoirs which have made this civil war so horribly familiar to us; and last, Cathelineau, already alluded to, known as the *Saint of Anjou* and the first elected commander-in-chief of the Catholic forces.

There was next the Army of Lower Vendée, 15,000 to 20,000 strong, raised in the *Marais* and on the sea-coast. It was commanded independently by Charette, an ex-naval officer, and, in Napoleon's estimation, the only genius of the revolt.

Between the Grand Army and that of the *Marais* were several intermediary ones, the most important being that under Royrand, an old chevalier of the order of St. Louis. It was known as the Army of the Centre, and its rallying points were Les Herbiers and Chantonnay. It mustered from 10,000 to 12,000 strong.

Moral unity and mutual confidence constituted the strength of these Royal and Catholic armies, in which nobles, priests, and peasants were bound together in the defence of a great cause. It was not so however with the Republican armies who were opposed to these. They were made up of National Guards, undisciplined volunteers, men requisitioned against their will, and of troops of the Line, forming altogether an incoherent mass, without prestige or harmony. If we add to this, that the generals who at first commanded these elements

were old and inexperienced, we shall be able in some measure to account for the numerous defeats of the Republic at the hands of the Royalists of La Vendée.

Easter recalled the insurgents to their homes, from which nothing would induce them to stay away long. The Vendean army, easily assembled at the sound of the tocsin, was with difficulty kept to its standards. After a victory the peasants would disperse to their farms to tend their cattle or cultivate their fields, leaving their leaders with only a personal following of, at most, two or three hundred men. Even when in touch with the enemy they had no patrols or sentinels, and their cavalry force never at any time exceeded one thousand.

But, acting in such a country, it was impossible for the Republicans to withstand at the outset even so irregular a force, animated as it was by religious enthusiasm and indomitable valour. The Vendean either ambushed their enemy in the deep defiles and roads of their country, keeping up a withering fire from behind the hedgerows that surrounded each farm, or else broke them into flight by a sudden, fierce, and impetuous attack on flank, centre, and rear. They proceeded to battle as to a *fête*, and everything gave way to that great religious march.

After Easter the Vendean leaders collected their followers again. The peasants were apportioned off into divisions. The Army of Anjou, 10,000 strong, under Bonchamps, was to act from the side of Angers, the Grand Army, 20,000 strong, under



d'Elbée took up a central position about Bressuire ; the Army of the *Marais* watched Nantes and the Sables, while Royrand's corps held the southern approaches into the *Bocage*. It must not be understood, however, that the Vendéans were divided into regular battalions ; each parish had its captain, each captain rallied to the chief of his division, who, in his turn, rallied to his generalissimo.

The Republican army held Nantes and Angers, and the entire right bank of the Loire, and Saumur on its left bank ; in the east they occupied Thouars and Bressuire ; in the south Luçon and Fontenay-le-Comte, and Sables-d'Olonne on the sea-coast ; while numerous guards defended smaller towns throughout the disaffected district.

In the first week of May, Bressuire and Thouars, the keys of Anjou and Poitou, were taken by the Vendéans under Bonchamps, Lescure, and La Rochejaquelein. On the 13th, the *white* army carried Châtaigneraie by assault, and advanced on Fontenay, which covered the road to Niort. But they were defeated in the plain of La Pissotte before Fontenay on the 16th, and compelled to re-enter the *Bocage*, with a loss of all their cannon. The combined Vendean army of 35,000 men, under Lescure, La Rochejaquelein, Bonchamps and d'Elbée, now took the field, and marched, full of enthusiasm, against the town. The Republicans under Chalbos were completely defeated and pursued to Niort, which the Vendéans might also have seized had they pushed on after the battle.

Meanwhile the divisions under Cathelineau,

Charette, and Stofflet, though repulsed in an attack on the Sables-d'Olonne, had been victorious in other parts of La Vendée, and threatened Nantes from the left bank of the Loire.

The advance on Niort from Fontenay had been deferred because the Republican generals Salomon and Lygonier were threatening Thouars and Cholet in rear of the Grand Army, which in consequence re-entered the *Bocage*, fixing a rendezvous at Chatillon for the 1st of June.

Meanwhile the Republic had not been idle. Reinforcements were poured in from all parts of France, from the Alps, from Orleans, and from the suburbs and Alsacias of Paris. Among the corps ordered to the scene was the Germanic Legion or Legion of the North, in which, as we have seen, Marceau held a commission.

There were three separate Republican or *blue* armies in the west of France at this time : (i.) The army of the coasts of La Rochelle, with cantonments at the Sables-d'Olonne, Niort, and Saumur ; this force was under Biron, with Westermann in command of the advance guard. (ii.) The army of the coasts of Brest, under Canclaux, guarding Angers and Nantes and the Loire-Inférieure generally. (iii.) The army of the coasts of Cherbourg.

As arranged, 40,000 Vendéans were collected on the 1st of June at Chatillon, under Cathelineau, Lescure, and La Rochejaquelein. On the 7th, a portion of this *white* army defeated Lygonier at Doué, and pursued him to the heights of Bournan, which protect the town of Saumur. The Vendéans,

seeing that the Republicans held a strong position here, and not deeming a frontal attack feasible, retired from before Saumur. A council of war was held, at which it was decided to attack Saumur from Varrains and under the heights of the chateau, that is, from the east and south-east of the town.

For this purpose the Vendean army advanced to Montreuil, but, hearing that Salomon was coming from Thouars to the relief of Saumur, while the greater half of the army continued its march along the Thouet to St. Just, the remainder stopped at Montreuil where it gave battle to Salomon, who was utterly defeated with the loss of half his forces and retreated to Niort leaving Saumur to its fate. On the 10th of June the white army arrived in sight of Saumur.

Thus, in scarce three months from their first rising, the Royalists were in military possession of almost all the dépôts of La Vendée and the Deux-Sèvres, and of the Loire-Inférieure and the Maine-et-Loire departments south of the great river. The territory in their occupation formed a circle with a radius of twenty miles. Cholet, Montaigu, and Mortagne lay about the centre, and it was here that the Vendéans concentrated their forces and stored their provisions and war-material for prospective campaigns.

The humanity of the Vendéans after their early victories was in marked contrast with the atrocious cruelties practised by the Republicans. There were, it is true, appalling massacres at this period at Machecoul and other places in Lower Poitou, but

these were quite exceptional and due solely to a vile wretch named Souchu, who soon after deserted the Royalists, whose cause he had thus of express purpose stained. The Vendean rule then was the rule of humanity. The warmest partisan of the revolution, on the other hand, cannot but characterize the excesses of the patriots as cruel and inhuman. "The houses of the rich laid waste, chateaux pillaged and given over to the flames, the wholesale spoliation of the peaceful proprietors of the *Plain*, the persecution of ministers of religion, the attempt to undermine the individual liberties of the richest nobles of the land, and those who had hitherto been most powerful." Such is the picture painted by a historian by no means partial to the insurgents; would that the truth ended where he has left it!

The patriots were goaded on to the committal of these things by the same power that inaugurated the Reign of Terror in Paris. The early measures of the National Convention were marked by a bloody and ruthless spirit, while many of the revolutionary agents with the armies exceeded, only too eagerly, the cruel orders they from time to time received. The very first of these orders, though modified subsequently, required the Republican soldier to exterminate men, women, and children, and even animals, in La Vendée!

This cruel spirit and these inhuman enactments are mentioned here to account for the savage nature of the struggle, and the strength and energy of the opposition, and, further, to point to the difficult task

that was set before those generals of the Republic who could never have approved of such conduct towards an enemy, far less towards a brother and a countryman. It is, alas! true that there were some commanders, like the *brave* Westermann, whose troops were well defined as a horde of assassins, who more than realized the wishes of the bloody tribunes of Paris; but it would be unjust to suppose that the Republican generals as a rule endorsed the massacring of prisoners and the laying waste of the country with fire and sword. "Cruelty," says Montaigne, "is the mother of cowardice;" such a charge could never, therefore, be laid with any justice or reason to the account of men like Kléber, or Dubayet, or Marceau, although they might have been the involuntary witnesses or the indirect agents in scenes and individual deeds which filled their souls with horror and drove them often to the verge of despair.

As for Marceau, after the defeat of the Republican troops at the Camp des Roches and the retreat to Luçon, we find him, with Bard, at the head of the party of indulgence formed at Niort, Luçon, and Fontenay, while Rossignol and the party of terror were thirsting for blood at Saumur.

"The bronze mask of civil war," as Victor Hugo has well said, "has two profiles—one turned towards the past, the other towards the future, but as tragic the one as the other."

With this long but necessary digression we return to Marceau and the defence of Saumur.

The town of Saumur commands one of the great

passages over the Loire. It lies at the opening of the angle formed by the junction of the Thouet with the Loire, at the foot of some hills which are suddenly cut off by the valley of the former river, after having run some distance along the southern banks of the latter. The old chateau is situated at the extremity of these hills, and commands the town and the two rivers. The position of Saumur is thus naturally a strong one; covered absolutely on the north by the Loire, and on the south and west by the broad deep stream of the Thouet, it is only accessible by the heights on the east, and through the meadows of Varrains to the south-east, while the great bridge across the Loire renders a retreat to Angers always open and easy.

Three principal routes converge towards this bridge: those from Doué and Montreuil, which unite on the knolls of Bournan, about half a league from the town, and then cross the Thouet by the bridge of Fouchard; that from St. Just, which skirts the right bank of the Thouet and enters the town through Varrains; lastly, there was a road connecting Fontevrault with the eastern suburbs of Saumur.

The defences of the town consisted mainly of two large redoubts placed on the heights of Bournan, and supported by an intrenched camp in front of the bridge of Fouchard. As the attack was expected from the direction of Doué and Montreuil only, the greater portion of the troops with a formidable artillery was located here. Another redoubt had been traced on the right bank of the Thouet in the

meadows of Varrains, and was connected with the Loire by an old moat and wall, and by windmills and vineyard-fences, which offered, it was thought, a sufficient obstacle to an advance from the east and south-east. The Republican army thus took up a position outside the town, with the chateau and the town and its suburbs as a second line of defence to fall back on.

The patriot army numbered 16,000, exclusive of volunteers. Reinforcements were, in addition, introduced on the eve and morning of the attack by Generals Coustard, Berthier, and Santerre. Menou was commandant of the town, Berthier was posted on the left, Santerre was intrusted with the defence of the intrenched camp and the Varrains redoubt, while Coustard commanded the troops occupying the heights of Bournan.

The strength of the attacking force has been variously stated, but, seeing that a large portion of it had been detached to cope with Salomon, it could not have exceeded 20,000, with 100 pieces of cannon.

The advance was in three columns along both banks of the Thouet. The left, under Lescure, was directed against the redoubts of Bournan and the bridge of Fouchard; the right, or Bonchamps' division, commanded, in Bonchamps' absence, by Stofflet, advanced along the hills that fringe the Loire, while La Rochejaquelein, with the third column, moved between these hills and the Thouet on the redoubt of Varrains. The main attack was directed against the Republican left, but that on the centre and right was no less direct or decisive.

The white army continued its march from Montreuil along the Thouet to St. Just, the bridge of which, across the Doué, was neither defended nor destroyed. The actual attack commences at 4 p.m., by which time the advanced posts on the Doué road are taken in rear, and the sharpshooters are engaged all along the line on the east and south of the town, while a vigorous artillery fire is commenced on both sides. The Vendéans, impatient of restraint, cannot await the development of the preconcerted plan. They precipitate themselves on the fortified heights, the intrenched camp, the wind-mill inclosures, and the bridge of Fouchard, but are everywhere driven back. They retreat, but rally and re-face the enemy, although they have lost more than 300 in the first onset; three times repulsed, three times they return to the attack.

Lescure's column on the left had been roughly handled, and, in fact, was in full retreat towards St. Florent before it could be rallied by the calm courage of its leader, who had himself been wounded.

Marceau, with half a squadron of chasseurs, defended the approaches to the bridge of Fouchard, and contributed not a little to the first discomfiture of Lescure's division. He charged with great persistency, and drove the insurgent cavalry and infantry back over the bridge. His career was only arrested by the unfortunate overturning of some wagons, which gave the enemy's cavalry time to re-form and the peasants to recover from their panic. Marceau's cuirassiers, checked and taken in



flank and rear by the infantry fire, were in turn now charged by the Vendean horsemen and rolled back over the bridge. Marceau continued, however, to defend the *chaussée* of Fouchard until after dusk, when the arrival of Lescure and Marigny with artillery compelled him to fall back towards the chateau with a dozen men—all that was left to him of his cuirassiers.

While Lescure rallied his men on the left, Stofflet's division, in its second attack, had carried Berthier's position and the hill of Nôtre Dame on the right. In vain did Menou and Berthier place themselves at the head of their troops; these could not be brought to face the enemy, whose impulsive onset swept all before it up to the very gates of the town.

At the same time the youthful La Rochejaquelein, borne onward by his intrepid valour, stormed the redoubt in the meadow of Varrains at the head of his division, and entered the Grande Place with but four or five followers, pursuing the flying blues through the town and across the great bridge, and turning their own guns on them and against the castle.

Coustard, seeing that the fire of the batteries on his left had ceased, and that the Vendean were in possession of the bridge of Fouchard, and his retreat inevitable, conceived the design of reinforcing the left and of charging the enemy in the town, and so taking them in rear. But he failed to accomplish his object because the infantry refused to support the cavalry, and allowed these with their brave

leader, Weissen, to be sacrificed. It was now that Lescure turned the redoubts of Bournan, driving off Coustard, who abandoned his position, and retreated with at least some show of order.

It was nine o'clock when La Rochejaquelein first entered the town, but Coustard retired at a much later hour, and the castle, defended by 1,400 men, kept up a steady fire throughout the night. The carnage was great, the victory was complete, and the flying Republicans were pursued across the Loire for some distance along the road to Angers.

We have seen Marceau retreating from the bridge of Fouchard with a remnant of his cuirassiers. It was his intention to reach the chateau, which he saw still maintained its fire. He was proceeding across the meadows of Varrains when he saw a group of peasants around a prisoner whom, in the heat of victory, they were threatening to despatch. Marceau charged with his handful of cuirassiers and put to flight the soldiers of La Rochejaquelein taken unawares. He rescued the prisoner, who was wounded, and wore the tricolour scarf of a delegate of the National Convention, and whom Marceau now recognized to be none other than his implacable foe, the deputy Bourbotte. Hastily dismounting he offered him his horse and assisted him into the saddle, saying, "It is better that I, a soldier, should die than that the enemy should have the satisfaction of putting to death a representative of the people." The peasants returned, and Bourbotte's retreat was with difficulty covered by the affrighted cuirassiers, who heard cries of despair and treachery all around them. It

was a brave and a generous act, and one which could not fail to transform Bourbotte from a dangerous opponent into a constant and useful friend.

On the 14th June, prompted thereto by Bourbotte's own report, the Convention unanimously decreed as follows : " Citizen Marceau, an officer of the German Legion, who rescued Citizen Bourbotte, a representative of the people, from the hands of the rebels near Saumur, has deserved well of his country, and he is specially commended to the minister of war, in order that he might be promoted to a higher grade than that he now holds."

The Republican army retreated to Angers, La Flèche, and Le Mans, spreading consternation in its flight. Its loss could have been scarcely less than 2,000 in killed and wounded, while there were left in the hands of the Vendéans 80 cannon, 10,000 muskets, and 11,000 prisoners. The losses of the Vendéans have been variously given, but seeing that the two armies had attacked each other with desperation, and that the Vendéans were three times beaten back, they must have exceeded 1,000. But the victory was of the greatest importance to the Royalists. It gave them the control of an important passage of the Loire and of the navigation of this river, and opened up communication with the departments on its right bank, at the same time it compromised the fate of Nantes and Angers and the bridges of Cé, while it exposed the Indre-et-Loire and the Vienne departments to the incursions of the white army.

Bonchamps, cured of his wounds, arrived with

5,000 men the day after the battle, and it was now resolved to attack and secure Nantes. The defence of Nantes is one of the most important military events of the revolution, but we can only refer to it briefly here. Leaving La Rochejaquelein with a weak garrison to hold Saumur, the Grand Army, under command of Cathelineau, marched down the right bank of the river, while Charette, with 20,000 men, was asked to co-operate on the left bank. Angers was taken. But before Nantes was reached the army of peasants melted away to return to their fields and their cattle, and only 10,000 presented themselves before the town under Cathelineau. Charette commenced the attack at 2 a.m. on the 29th June. Cathelineau, delayed at Nort, did not arrive till 10 a.m. The combat was, however, sustained for eighteen hours, and Cathelineau succeeded at one time in reaching the very heart of the town. But the attack was ill-concerted, the Republican troops well posted, and, when Cathelineau fell mortally wounded, the Vendéans lost heart and beat a hasty retreat across the river, thus losing the command of its right bank which their victory at Saumur had secured. Cathelineau died of his wounds soon after, and d'Elbée was elected commander-in-chief of the white army in his place.

During the attack on Saumur many of the Republican troops had behaved with anything but bravery. In the midst of a fight some one would cry out "Treason! we are betrayed!" and immediately there followed panic and flight. The German Legion, although trained to arms in the Rhenish

provinces, especially distinguished itself in this manner, and it was resolved to disband this corps forthwith. Marceau thus found himself transferred to another regiment, the 11th Hussars, at the same time that he was appointed, through the influence of Bourbotte, adjutant-general on the staff of the army of the coasts of La Rochelle. He was ordered to place himself under the orders of Biron, who commanded this army, and who had his headquarters at Niort with his advance-guard, under Westermann, at Saint-Maixent.

While the Vendéans took Saumur and Angers and threatened Nantes, Royrand, with the army of the Centre, held the forces of Biron, and especially the division of Luçon, in check by occupying Chantonay. Here he collected his peasants together, and on the 28th June attacked Luçon, but was defeated with great loss by Sandoz, who, in spite of his victory, was relieved by Tuncq.

Commissaries had meanwhile been sent to Biron insisting on his making a diversion to save Nantes. Biron only moved Westermann forward into the *Bocage*, but failed himself to support him. In June, Westermann occupied Parthenay and Amaillou which he pillaged and burnt, likewise the chateaux of Lescure and La Rochejaquelein. On the 3rd July, after a severe engagement at Moulins aux Chèvres, he occupied Chatillon. The Grand Army, however, assembled against him at Cholet, and two days afterwards utterly routed him at the same spot, with the loss of two-thirds of his forces.

Finding it difficult to dislodge the Vendéans from

the south and east, it was resolved, at Biron's suggestion, to invade La Vendée from the north, that is, from the bridges of Cé near Angers, and to effect a junction with the army of Niort through Coron, Cholet, and Mortagne. The advance commenced on the 15th July, the blues were victorious at Martigné-Briant, but Santerre was utterly routed on the 18th near Coron and compelled to retreat to Saumur.

The inactivity of Biron was most marked, and Marceau was obliged to share in it. Biron complained that it was his clemency and moderation towards the Vendéans that the Convention disliked. This was true, but there is no doubt that Biron, a peer of France and the son of a marshal, had no heart in the work of suppressing the Royalists. He was now suspended and summoned to Paris.

"I have been recalled," he said, unmoved, to Marceau, on receipt of the order, "it is the beginning, I will go to the bitter end."

One Rossignol, a journeyman goldsmith of Paris, a man of no education, an adventurer, and one of the principal actors in the September Massacres, took Biron's place. Marceau was transferred to the Luçon division, commanded by Tuncq, as adjutant-general, a post for which Bourbotte had originally selected him.

As for Biron, his fate was the fate of Custine and of Dillon. On arrival in Paris he was accused at the bar of the Convention, and the arrest of the inhuman monster Rossignol was one of his crimes. As an ex-noble he could expect no mercy, and was

delivered over to the revolutionary tribunal. His last words as he mounted the scaffold were: "I have been unfaithful to my God, to my order, and to my King. But I die full of faith and of hope and of repentance."

The blow was a heavy one to Marceau, who had become even more closely attached to Biron, whose personality was so much the more attractive, than he had been to Dillon. He has expressed his grief at the loss of his leader and his friend in words that are the most touching of any in his journal:

"He heaped on me," he says, "kindnesses of every description. His solicitude for me was that of a father. Out of the goodness of his heart he took my education in hand, and instructed me especially in my profession, and taught me how to study men. No man can realize what I suffered at our separation, now, alas! become eternal. After I lost him I felt myself alone in the world, for in all La Vendée I had but him for my friend. I needed rest, but, as though to overwhelm me with misery, I was compelled by fate to live among men who bore no manner of resemblance to him, and intercourse with whom made me feel my loss all the more keenly, inasmuch as there was no one now to whom I could confide the troubles of my soul."

## CHAPTER II.

*The Luçon division—Battles of Luçon and of the Camp des Roches—Arrival of the Mayençais—First invasion of the Bocage—Second invasion—Combat of La Tremblaye—Kléber—Battle of Cholet.*

LUÇON, where Marceau now arrived, is five miles to the west of Fontenay and on the northern border of the *Marais*. The absence of fortifications is made up for by advantageous positions in advance of the town, approached across open plains, which afford no shelter to an attacking army.

It redounds to Marceau's credit that he continued to serve in the army after his friend Biron had been replaced in the command by Biron's bitterest enemy, the demagogue Rossignol. In spite of what it cost his feelings he never forgot that it was the Republic and not its generals he served. Now, as in the future, he kept out of all political partisanship by making the rule of military obedience the law of his life.

The Luçon division was commanded by Tuncq, that of Fontenay by Chalbos. Both divisions were watched by the army of the Centre assembled at the camp of l'Oie near Chantonay, under Royrand.



Chantonnay, situated on the edge of the *Bocage*, guarded the approaches to it from the south, and its possession was the object for which the rival armies constantly contended during the next few months.

On the 25th July, Tuncq, after driving the Vendéans away from Saint-Philibert and the bridge of Charron, advanced to Chantonnay itself. But, after destroying all provisions and munitions of war he could not carry away with him, and pillaging and burning the town, he fell back once more to Pont-Charron and thence to Luçon. The only result of this incursion into the *Bocage* was to provoke an attack on Luçon.

D'Elbée joined Royrand at Chantonnay, and the combined force of 12,000 to 15,000 Vendéans advanced on the 30th to attack Luçon. After five hours' desperate fighting they were completely routed and pursued to the bridge of Charron.

It is doubtful whether Marceau was present at any of these engagements. Either he had not yet arrived or was attached to Tuncq's staff. The latter theory would account for the omission of Marceau's name equally as well as the former, for Tuncq did the least of the fighting, leaving everything to the officers of his division.

It was at this period that two parties were formed among the Republicans; that of terror and studied atrocity at Saumur, represented by Rossignol and Ronsin, and that of humanity and indulgence, and disapproval of the rigour of the Convention, at Niort, Luçon, and Fontenay. Marceau's arrival at

Luçon as adjutant-general introduced into that town the tenets of the latter party, for we find no more useless expeditions and no more wilful destruction of towns and villages.

The Vendéans, repulsed before Luçon, determined on a second attack, both to retrieve their defeat and to insure the safety of Royrand's division of the centre.

The garrison of Luçon consisted at this time of 5,370 infantry, 414 cavalry, and 31 guns; reinforced after Marceau's arrival by 2,000 infantry and cavalry, and some light artillery from Niort and Fontenay.

D'Elbée proceeded to Les Herbiers, where he was joined by Charette, and, on the 12th August, a junction was effected with Royrand's army at the camp of l'Oie. Tuncq had ample notice of the premeditated attack, for Marceau with the advance-guard had reconnoitred the *Bocage* and sent him word that the Vendéans were massing near Chantonay with the intention of moving either on Luçon or the Sables-d'Olonne. He accordingly drew up his division, now nearly 9,000 strong, on the same heights where he had been previously victorious, and in two lines. He masked his light artillery with the first, and ordered the second to lie down till it received the signal to rise and throw itself on the enemy.

The Vendean army, variously estimated at between 14,000 and 35,000 men, advanced on the 14th August, in three columns. The right was under Charette and Lescure, the left under La Rochejaquelein, while d'Elbée and Royrand com-

manded the centre. Lescure, confident in the superiority of numbers, gave the fatal advice to attack the Republican army on open ground.

A little after midday Lescure and Charette began the action with great spirit, and the left wing of the blues fell back before their determined onset, losing five guns. But, for want of clear instructions, the Vendean centre delivered its attack too late, the two divisions before d'Elbée held their own and retired leisurely on the second line; the artillery was now unmasked, and the second line rose up and fell on the Vendéans. The light artillery, used in action for the first time and ably manœuvred, acted with great effect on the level plain, and spread death and consternation among Royrand's peasants.

It was now that Marceau, with a body of infantry and two squadrons of cavalry, made an impetuous charge all along the left front, completely turning the enemy's right and scattering Lescure's men in all directions.

La Rochejaquelein and Marigny arrived on the scene, but only in time to cover the retreat. The rout was soon complete, the Vendéans leaving 1,500 dead and wounded, and eighteen guns, on the fatal plain. Their entire artillery would have been lost to them had it not been for the courageous action of La Rochejaquelein, who with sixty men covered its retreat at the bridge of Bessay, while forty peasants of Courlay, of Lescure's division, protected with crossed bayonets the centre, and sustained the whole charge of the Republican cavalry without losing ground.

The Royalists were pursued as far as Saint-Hermand, where a strong advance-guard was posted, and Chantonnay was occupied once more. Lecomte and Marceau, with 7,000 men, were left in charge of the new position. Tuncq himself returned to Luçon, leaving his advance-guard, if we may call it so, dangerously posted with its flank exposed to a sudden attack from the direction of Saint-Fulgent.

Early in September, Rossignol, who had visited all his divisions and had blamed the generals for not acting in concert, ordered the Luçon division to sweep the country between Chantonnay and La Roche-sur-Yon, and to keep touch with the Sables-d'Olonne column on its left. At the same time he ordered Chalbos's division up to Châtaigneraie on the right.

The Vendéans, alarmed at this activity, were once more moved to dislodge the Republicans from the important position of Chantonnay. A new plan was concerted with Royrand, who was to make a false move towards Quatre Chemins on the 5th September, while the Grand Army, 15,000 to 25,000 strong, suddenly attacked Lecomte's camp at Les Roches.

The action commenced at five o'clock in the afternoon, and by nine of the same evening the Republican army had been driven from its intrenchments and entirely beaten, with a loss of two-thirds of its men and all its artillery.

Lecomte's despatch gives some interesting particulars of the disaster, while it proves how efficient Marceau had become in the profession of arms, and

in the handling of men even under the most adverse circumstances.

Being informed that the Vendean army, 25,000 strong, with twenty-one guns, was descending from Les Herbiers towards Châtaigneraie, Lecomte moved forward the Orleans battalion to the bridge of Charron, already guarded by a Dordogne battalion and some artillery. While absent on the heights beyond Saint-Vincent, now menaced by the enemy in force, Lecomte received a despatch to the effect that the Dordogne battalion had abandoned the bridge without firing a shot. He at once sent his adjutant-general, Marceau, to rally the fugitives, and to establish order at the bridge. Marceau met the fugitives close to the camp of Les Roches, and a little further on the Orleans battalion, which had also retired.

The bridge of Charron being abandoned, and Chantonay already in the hands of the rebels, Marceau placed these battalions in array on the left of the great road that commands the latter town, to hold the enemy in check, advancing at the same time two field-guns and some cavalry. Certain battalions posted on Marceau's left now precipitated themselves back on to the camp and exposed his flank. Marceau rallied them and induced them to reform, at the same time Lecomte came up with reinforcements. Order was completely restored, and the enemy forced to retire on this side.

Foiled on the left, the Vendéans now vigorously assailed the Republican right. Marceau foresaw

this manœuvre, and, as the enemy were executing it in loose order, thought the time had arrived for a cavalry charge. But the cavalry refused to move, and it was to no purpose that he placed himself at their head and incited them on. The two battalions of the Charente-Inférieure at this moment attacked the flank of the insurgents with desperate courage, and had the cavalry followed Marceau the disaster that ensued would have been wholly averted.

Marceau's troops continued, however, to make a stand, and a vigorous fire was maintained along the entire line as the enemy came on in overwhelming numbers. Suddenly the Calvados battalion quitted its post in the centre, exposing the *Vengeur* and the Deux-Sèvres battalions, which were compelled to retire and take refuge in the woods. The enemy, taking advantage of the gap, poured in and cut the Republican line in two.

Lécomte, ignorant of what had happened, had continued to fight with two battalions, when Marceau, cutting his way through the enemy's ranks at great risk to his life, came and informed him of the defeat of the centre. On this Lécomte retired through the woods, Marceau helping him to save the *débris* of his army.

The enemy's attack had been directed with great skill and foresight against the only road that afforded a retreat, and to this cause Lécomte rightly assigned the loss of nearly all his artillery, provisions, and transport. He owed the safety of the 2,500 men, all that remained of his force of 7,000, to the valour

and skill of his adjutant-general, Marceau, whom he eulogized highly in his despatches.

"The victory was due," says the Vendean account, "to Bonchamps' division, . . . which, with great intrepidity, carried the intrenchments. Thus surrounded, the defeat of the blues was terrible. The great roads were intercepted, and their columns bewildered in the *Bocage*. They lost all their cannon and baggage, and seldom had suffered so great a loss of men. A battalion that had assumed the name of *the Avenger*, and had never given any quarter to any Vendean, was wholly exterminated."

The shattered remnant of the Luçon division was reunited under Beffroy, who ordered Lecomte and Marceau to reorganize it, and make it fit to take the field again.

This check was likely to derange Rossignol's projects, because the disorganization of one of the columns would leave a chasm between the division of Les Sables and that of Fontenay. We shall see how it effected the so-called first invasion of the *Bocage*.

The other Republican divisions had, like that of Luçon, failed to maintain a footing in La Vendée, now transformed into a vast fortress, well provisioned, covered with impenetrable forests, and defended by 100,000 armed peasants, inured to war and supplied with a formidable artillery.

The National Convention had been at length convinced by these and previous failures that greater resources and stronger measures were needed to attack the insurgent country if more decisive results

were to be obtained. The measures proposed were, that strong reinforcements of regular troops be sent, that a *levée en masse* of the inhabitants of the districts bordering on La Vendée be prepared, and that the Vendéans be exterminated, their habitations destroyed, their crops reaped and carried away, and their forests cut down or burnt. We pass over in silence the reflections to which these last proposals of the Convention must have given birth in the minds of those soldiers, who, like Marceau, were called upon to be the instruments for carrying them into effect.

The first of these measures led to the arrival at Tours, under the command of Dubayet and Kléber, of the garrison that had lately defended Mayence, followed soon after by those of Lille, Condé, and Valenciennes, in all some 16,000 veterans, the flower of the French army. Their arrival changed the aspect of the war, and led to some of the most important events in the life of Marceau.

The forces of the Republic in and around La Vendée were divided, as we have seen, into two armies; that of the coasts of La Rochelle in six divisions under Rossignol, and that of the coasts of Brest under Canclaux. Each army had its central committee of surveillance, which watched the conduct of the generals and saw that the orders of the Convention were carried out.

The veterans of Mayence were unwilling to place themselves under the demagogue Rossignol, who, moreover, had never proved himself capable of even the lowest military command. A council of war



was held on the 2nd September at Saumur, when it was agreed that the Mayençais should join Canclaux and not Rossignol, and that the main advance on Mortagne and Cholet should be undertaken from Nantes and not from Saumur. Canclaux was to sweep Lower Vendée and be at Légé between the 11th and 13th September. His arrival here was to be the signal for the departure of the several divisions of the Army of La Rochelle. The two armies were to unite at Mortagne on the 16th, previous to a combined advance on Cholet.

Rossignol agreed to these measures, but did not hesitate to modify them to suit his own views. The columns of Luçon and Niort were to advance supporting one another towards Bressuire and Argentin, and to reach these parts on the 14th. The Luçon column had already advanced a second time towards the *Bocage*, and numerous skirmishes had taken place around Saint-Hermand and Chantonay, in which Marceau, as adjutant-general and commander of the advance-guard, played a prominent part. On the 14th Beffroy received orders to retire to Luçon, maintaining advance posts at Pont-Charron and Saint-Hermand only; Chalbos was also ordered back to Fontenay. Rossignol's order was the result of the defeat of Chantonay; but this was only the excuse for disarranging a plan he had never at heart approved of.

Meanwhile Dubayet's division continued its march down the right bank of the Loire to Nantes, where all was made ready for the preconcerted invasion of the *Bocage*. According to the plan agreed upon at

Saumur, the entire insurgent country was to be scoured between the 10th and the 16th September, and the rebels were to be enclosed by the Republican columns between Mortagne, Bressuire, and Vihiers. Their destruction would then be inevitable.

A force of 200,000 men now surrounded La Vendée, to oppose which the Royalists had one army near Nantes under Charette, one on the left bank of the Loire under Bonchamps, two divisions in Anjou and East Poitou under La Rochejaquelein and Lescure respectively, while Royrand's army watched as before the approaches from the south.

The designs of the Republicans were well known to the Vendéans. This knowledge and their central position gave the latter an immense advantage. While the isolated divisions of the blue army acted separately and could not succour one another, the Vendéans could concentrate their entire force rapidly on any threatened point. The Vendean leaders, many of whom were either trained soldiers or had gained an experience of this kind of warfare in America, were not slow to take advantage of this and to develop the plan of allowing the enemy to enter the *Bocage* and then to attack each division in turn with superior forces.

This accounts for the attack on Lecomte and Marceau at the camp of Les Roches, above described. It was necessary, before the advance of the divisions commenced, to secure the rear by inflicting a crushing defeat on the force that menaced the south, and so to prevent any invasion of the *Bocage* from that direction.

And now commences a struggle so terrible that all that has gone before seems to have been only a prelude to it. We are called upon to harden our hearts and to witness nothing but scenes of carnage and desolation, which fix our attention by their enormous and lurid atrocity. Fortunately for us there are a few soldiers of the Republic who play their part humanely and bravely through these scenes. All war is cruel, but there are two ways of waging it. Westermann and Rossignol afforded examples of the one method, Kléber and Marceau of the other.

We have seen that Rossignol had ordered the columns of Luçon and Fontenay to return to their respective bases. At the same time he issued the unwise order for the divisions of Santerre and Duhoux to advance from Thouars and the Loire on to Cholet. On the 14th September Thouars was taken by Lescure, but this success was followed by the victory of Santerre over the Vendéans at Doué. On the 17th Santerre was again victorious at Vihiers and Gomord, but the following day he was drawn into a trap between Vihiers and Coron, and his army utterly routed with loss of all its artillery. The same fate befell Duhoux, who had advanced to support Santerre. Everywhere the Republican advance from the east and north was checked, and their divisions scattered, while the terror produced by these victories broke up the *levée en masse* assembled between Tours and Poitiers.

On the 9th September the army of Canclaux

entered Lower Vendée, the right under Beysser maintaining touch with the Sables d'Olonne column. "The Republicans marched with the sword in one hand and the torch in the other." Pornic, Bourgneuf, Machecoul, Palluau, Légé, Montaigu, and Clisson, were successively taken, and the white army driven from Lower Vendée into Poitou and the *Bocage*. Canclaux and the Mayençais had done more in a week than all the armies of the west had hitherto been able to effect in six months.

At many of these places were found culverin bearing the arms of England, also English powder, guns, and standards, showing that assistance had been given to the Royalist cause from without. In the middle of August an English squadron had hovered about Belle-Île and the mouths of the Loire, but it drew off without effecting anything. Much was promised by the English government at this period, but the assistance only arrived after the Vendean armies had been destroyed and the Royalist cause almost desperate.

The Nantes and coast divisions now concentrated their advance on Mortagne. Charette meanwhile, collected his forces together at Tiffauges, where he was joined by Bonchamps and d'Elbée. On the 19th September the Vendéans, 40,000 strong, were in array of battle on the great road between Tiffauges and Cholet, with their front towards Torfou. On the same day Kléber attacked them, but, in spite of the heroic courage and efforts of his veterans, he was defeated and compelled to retreat. The same fate befell Beysser at Montaigu on the 22nd.

Bonchamps defeated Canclaux himself on the march from Clisson, while Charette gained a signal victory over the column from Sables-d'Olonne.

The defeat of the coast divisions was as crushing as it was complete; they retired discomfited to their respective bases at Nantes and Sables-d'Olonne. During their rapid marches and counter-marches and fierce onslaughts the Royalists displayed more than the activity and tenacious valour for which they had already become famous. The victory of Saint-Fulgent, which was, so to speak, the last prize of their courage, put the seal on the reputation of the illustrious chief who led them to battle.

"Thus," says Alison, "by a series of most brilliant military combinations, seconded by the most heroic exertions on the part of the peasants, was the invasion of six armies, amounting to 100,000 regular troops, part of whom were the best soldiers of France, defeated, and losses inflicted on the Republicans, incomparably greater than they had suffered from all the allies put together since the commencement of the war; a striking proof of the admirable skill with which their chiefs had availed themselves of their central position and peculiar mode of fighting to crush the invading forces, and a memorable instance of what can be effected by resolute men, even without the advantages of regular organization, if ably conducted, against the most formidable superiority of military force."

The veterans of Mayence, though repulsed, were not annihilated, nor was it probable that brave and

experienced commanders like Canclaux, Dubayet, and Kléber would easily give up a campaign, the initial result of which was merely to give them a knowledge of their own weaknesses, as well as of the enemy's country and tactics.

Canclaux resolved on a second advance, and solicited Rossignol to co-operate with his army. Rossignol and his council decided that the columns of Saumur, Thouars, and Châtaigneraie should unite at Bressuire on the 7th October, and thence march to Chatillon to make their attack concurrently with that of Canclaux. The columns of Luçon and Sables-d'Olonne, because of their late reverses and of the dangers which threatened them from Lower Vendée, were ordered to keep for the present on the defensive.

On the 25th September the Mayençais, leaving Lower Poitou untouched on their right flank, again advanced and occupied successively Clisson, Montaigu, and Mortagne, defeating d'Elbée and Bonchamps at Saint-Symphorien, between Tiffauges and Mortagne. The Republicans owed their success to the ruinous dissensions which now broke out among the Royalist chiefs, and under which they abandoned their plan of rapid combinations against individual divisions. Charette drew off towards Noirmoutiers, while Lescure and Beaurepaire took post near Chatillon, leaving Bonchamps to meet the main attack from the west and north-west almost unaided.

The defeat of the Mayençais had meanwhile produced something like a panic in Paris. Barrère,

rising in his presidential chair, addressed the Convention in these memorable words: "The inexplicable La Vendée exists still. . . . The brigands must be exterminated by the 20th October. They are like the giant in the fable, who was only vulnerable when he touched the earth, and we must hunt and expel them from their own soil before we shall be able to suppress them."

Further reinforcements were despatched, but the most important measure, and one that should have been adopted six months before, was that by which all the armies were united into one, and called the Army of the West. L'Echelle, a pompous and inexperienced general, was appointed commander-in-chief, Canclaux and Dubayet recalled, Rossignol sent to Rennes, and all the commissioners, except Bourbotte and Turreau, both of whom exercised considerable influence on Marceau's life, removed to other spheres of action. Kléber assumed the command till L'Echelle should arrive, but the advance of the Nantes column was suspended before Tiffauges.

After the arrival of L'Echelle at Saumur it was agreed that the army should continue its march on Cholet, where it should form a junction with the three columns from Bressuire; at the same time orders were given to the Luçon and Sables divisions to advance towards the general rendezvous.

Chalbos advanced from Châtaigneraie to Bressuire, Westermann clearing the enemy before him and burning and pillaging the country far and wide. A junction was effected with the Saumur

and Thouars columns at Bressuire, whence Chalbos, with 20,000 men, proceeded to Chatillon, now covered by the divisions of Lescure and Beaurepaire. On Chalbos being reinforced, the Vendéans fell back leisurely, abandoning the town to Westermann and his horde of marauding cavalry. The next day, however, Bonchamps came up with his division and utterly routed Westermann, the main Republican army retiring to Bressuire. Westermann returned to Chatillon by night with a handful of men, and committed a horrible carnage on the Vendéans, many of whom were too drunk or too fatigued to oppose him, or to realize that the enemy was again in their midst. Women and children, blues as well as whites, were included in the indiscriminate slaughter. The Royalists now fell back from Chatillon with the intention of reuniting at Mortagne to prepare for a general battle.

Previous to his advance on Bressuire, Chalbos had called away Lecomte's corps, thus reducing the Luçon column to 3,000 men ; but this was made up again by the arrival of some companies of grenadiers from Saint-Fulgent, whom Marceau selected, together with other tried battalions, to form his advance-guard. Beffroy had already handed over the command of the Luçon division to General Bard. This division was to march to Les Herbiers, and then, after driving the enemy off, to Mortagne, when it was to establish itself on the heights overlooking the Sèvre, and erect batteries to cannonade the town and bridge. By so doing it would place



itself between the Mayençais and the Chatillon column now converging on Mortagne.

These orders were carried out and the advance through the *Bocage* conducted with the greatest skill, rapidity, and caution. On the morning of the 14th October, Marceau occupied the heights overlooking the Sèvre Nantaise with his advance-guard. The evacuation of Mortagne by the enemy and the approach of the army of Mayence under L'Echelle facilitated the march of the Luçon column, the enemy opposed to it retiring on Mallièvre ; only at Les Herbiers, where Royrand was posted with 3,000 men, had any opposition been met with.

The Vendean army under d'Elbée and Lescure, with whom the forces of Bonchamps and Royrand had now effected a junction, occupied at this time the heights of Saint-Christophe, covering Cholet and the roads that converge on it from Tiffauges and Mortagne. Bonchamps by the road of Tiffauges, and Lescure by that of Mortagne were to march round the flanks of the advancing blue army and take up a position in its rear.

Arrived at the heights of the Sèvre, the Luçon column received orders from L'Echelle to go through Mortagne without stopping there and to advance on the road to Cholet, where it would be met by a battalion of direction to connect it with the advance-guard of the Mayençais under Beaupuy. The staff-officer, Robert, who conveyed the order, omitted to tell this general of his part in the manœuvre, and thus nearly caused the destruction of the entire column, which owed its safety to

the bold stand made by Marceau and his advance-guard.

"In passing through Mortagne," says Bard's report, "I forbid all manner of pillage, under pain of death, and my adjutant-general, Marceau, saw that my orders were punctiliously obeyed. I advanced along the road to Cholet without meeting with any reinforcements. What I did meet was the enemy, who burst upon us from every direction."

By some mistake Bonchamps' advance along the Tiffauges road was delayed. This, and the sudden advance of the Luçon column, prevented Lescure's march to the rear, and the Vendéans were met in the avenues of the Château de la Tremblaie, half way between Mortagne and Cholet.

Marceau, suddenly assailed, thought at first that the attack was a mistake on the part of the battalion that should have supported him; but he was soon undeceived when he felt the brunt of Lescure's army bearing down on him. He at once placed himself on the defensive, and his troops, though taken by surprise, sustained the fire that almost encircled them with great composure and firmness. Bard came up to Marceau's rescue, but had to fly back immediately to the tail of his column, which, having been ambuscaded by the Vendéans, and fearing to be cut off, was beginning to retreat to Mortagne; he had just succeeded in rallying his men when he fell, mortally wounded. He was carried to Mortagne, and Marceau assumed command of the column.

In the midst of his brave grenadiers Marceau continued the struggle in front. The enemy threatened

to envelop him, and he would have succumbed to superior numbers had not the battalion of chasseurs under Tyran, sent by Beaupuy, arrived at this juncture. The combat was protracted and stubborn, the brave Tyran was killed, but Marceau redoubled his efforts and suddenly assumed the offensive, and, charging at the head of his troops, drove the Vendéans before him, securing the château of La Tremblaie in his front and the woods occupied by the Vendéans on his right.

Meanwhile, Beaupuy, in command of Kléber's advance-guard, hearing the cannonade on his right, and seeing the column of Luçon engaged, despatched Tyran as above mentioned, and simultaneously ordered an advance on Saint-Christophe. Seeing that his left was protected by Kléber he pushed on to the front himself in time to see the white standards of La Vendée, on which the fair hands of Madame de Lescure (afterwards the Marchioness de la Rochejaquelein) had embroidered the golden lilies of France, moving on to the heights of La Tremblaie. Beaupuy, by making a circuit round these heights, turned the right flank of the Vendean army, which gave way before his brisk attack. The offensive was resumed along the entire line and the enemy fell back on Cholet. Lescure rallied a few of his brave peasants and made a last charge, but a ball struck him above the eye and he fell senseless to the ground. He was carried away, bathed in blood, but still breathing, by a faithful servant who had accompanied him to the field of battle.

The loss of their chief completed the rout of the

Vendeans, who fled through Cholet, and thence by night to Beaupréau on the way to the Loire.

The enemy's artillery and cavalry continued to occupy Cholet, and, as it was now night, the Republican army, overcome with fatigue, bivouacked on the heights, where Kléber attempted to restore order by arranging the troops in two irregular lines, with the Luçon division on the right.

Kléber's head-quarters were in a field of gorse on the left of the main road. Here, at midnight, Marceau, impatient to make the acquaintance of the great soldier of whom he had heard so much, visited him seated before the camp fire. Kléber, pre-occupied and anxious about the safety of the army, received the young officer coldly, and asked him how far off the troops he commanded were bivouacked. "About one mile from here," replied Marceau. "Then," said Kléber, "you ought not under the circumstances to have left them. Go back and resume your command. There will be time enough for us to see each other when we have seen the last of the enemy."

Marceau, stung to the quick by such a welcome, especially after the episode of La Tremblaie, retired disheartened and dejected. But Kléber made amends to him the very next day, and showed the confidence he had in him by placing him in the centre of the new position. They met in the thick of the fight when bullets were flying all around them. Kléber stretched out his hand, which Marceau grasped in silence, and their friendship was sealed for ever, that great friendship which will out-

live even their military renown and their humanity. No two men were outwardly more dissimilar ; it was their humanity, their integrity, their courage which dared all for the cause they both loved and honoured, that united them so closely together. Henceforth, from the day of the battle of Cholet, they walk side by side, supporting each other through the perilous life of a soldier ; together they fight in La Vendée, on the Sambre and Meuse, and on the Rhine, until the day when the unerring bullet of the Tyrolese rifleman severs them for ever. Kléber continues on his path, but at length, in Egypt, and not many years after, he, too, closes his glorious career.

The day after the battle of Saint-Christophe the Vendean artillery, after firing a few parting shots, evacuated Cholet, covered by their cavalry. Kléber immediately ordered his troops to traverse the town and occupy the heights beyond it. The movement was carried out with great precision and the strictest discipline was maintained. Beaupuy and Marceau led the way with their advance-guards. Kléber had issued stringent orders for the protection of life and property, pickets were posted in every quarter and street, and the soldiers were prevented from entering the houses and pillaging the town.

The river Moine runs before Cholet ; beyond it is unequal, hilly ground, forming a semicircle of heights. On the left of this semicircle is the wood of Cholet ; in the centre, but a little thrown back, Cholet itself ; and on the right some heights crowned by a château. Kléber placed Beaupuy with the

reserve of the Mayençais under Haxo on the left before the wood, the Luçon column in the centre protecting the main road from Beaupréau and the approaches from Chemillé and Tremontines, and Vimeux with the rest of the Mayençais on the heights to the right. The Republican forces numbered 22,000 of all arms, including nearly 3,000 cavalry and thirty pieces of artillery. The arrival of the columns of Chabos and Müller from Chatillon at 2 a.m. on the 17th October, added 9,000 more to the number.

As no enemy appeared on the morning of the 17th October, it was resolved to advance to Beaupréau, and to send a flying column to intercept them in case they moved on Nantes.

At Beaupréau, where the white army was assembled, all was disorder and disagreement. Bonchamps at length prevailed on the other chiefs to make a last effort to crush the invading force at Cholet, and pass the Loire into Brittany as conquerors. The Royalists accordingly advanced to the number of 41,000 men upon Cholet on the morning of the 17th October.

By 2 p.m. the advance-guards of Beaupuy and Marceau were driven in. The Royalists, who marched for the first time in close columns like troops of the line, precipitated themselves at the charge along the whole line with the rage and valour that is born of despair. Their object was at once to engage the Republicans at close quarters and to silence their guns.

Bonchamps and d'Elbée with 14,000 men directed all their efforts against the centre, at the same time that La Rochejaquelein and Stofflet bore down on

the wings. On the right Vimeux was so advantageously posted that all the endeavours of the enemy against him proved unavailing. Such was the fury of their onslaught, however, on the left flank, that they carried all before them, gained possession of the woods of Cholet, drove Beaupuy back on his reserve, captured a large park of artillery, and penetrated to the very faubourgs of Cholet. The Republicans strove in vain, their position was turned and the battle appeared to be lost. But Marceau, with the column of Luçon, stood fast in the centre and enabled Kléber to bring up his reserves. The words of Kléber's despatch graphically describe what occurred here :

"The centre, formed of the Luçon division under the orders of Marceau, was perfectly covered. This brave young warrior and his doughty companions in arms had already shown at La Tremblaie what they were worth and what they could do.

"While the combat was still doubtful on our left, the head of Müller's division, 4,000 strong, arrived on the scene. Here was a reinforcement arrived at a critical moment! It advances, but before it gains the heights it is panic-stricken, and flies back in disorder, even to Cholet, spreading consternation everywhere. . . . Thus, without even having seen the enemy, these soldiers leave it to the army of Mayence and the column of Luçon to reap the glory of the victory.

"The cannonade along the centre suddenly increases. I hasten there with Damas. The rebels, rallied against this point, return at the charge.

Marceau sees them, but never flinches. He advances his artillery, which he has carefully masked. The unsuspecting horde of fanatics is now within half a gunshot of him. At this moment he opens fire with grape, mowing down entire lines as they rise up against him. The rebels, taken aback, stop, give way, turn their backs, and follow the example of their left. Marceau now takes up the pursuit, and I support him with the five battalions I had placed in *échelon* behind to cover our possible retreat."

But the Royalists rally, re-form, and return to the attack, and are only kept at bay by Marceau's grenadiers, who again and again cut their way into the ranks wedged into the line. Soon Royalist and Republican are mingled together, and the field of battle becomes an arena of furious gladiators, who single out each other in mortal combat.

While the centre maintains itself and presents this horrible picture, and the Vendean right is still victorious, in spite of the heroic efforts of Beaupuy, the reserve of Mayence guards is ordered up. Traversing Cholet, it rolls back the flank of the Vendéans, at the same time that the cavalry charge from right to left along their disordered ranks.

The first shock of the Mayençais is bravely sustained, and even repulsed. Beaupuy orders another charge, and at last the intrepid courage of this commander and his veteran troops, together with the stubborn firmness of Marceau's grenadiers in the centre, triumphs over the blind desperation of the Royalists.



D'Elbée, Bonchamps, and La Rochejaquelein rally 200 cavalry and some infantry, and precipitate themselves on the conquerors like wild animals, leaving everywhere traces of blood and carnage. The Republican cavalry, the Mayençais, and the grenadiers charge once more the soldiers of Bonchamps and d'Elbée. The direst confusion follows. Ranks, standards, chiefs, soldiers, friend and foe, white and blue, meet in indiscriminate collision and recognize each other only to deal mortal blows with sabre and bayonet.

Beaupuy is surrounded, but numerous squadrons come to his assistance. The Vendéans are now massacred around d'Elbée and Bonchamps, who are themselves struck down, and their bodies with difficulty rescued.

Ten thousand Vendéans are left on the field during this two days' fight around Cholet. The remainder retreat to Beaupréau, protected by La Rochejaquelein. Westermann, hastening up from Chatillon, is sent in pursuit, supported by a corps of infantry under Beaupuy.

"Thus ended," says Kléber, "this bloody and memorable day. The enemy took twelve pieces of cannon, . . . d'Elbée and Bonchamps were mortally wounded, never before had they engaged us in so obstinate, so well-directed a battle, and yet one that has proved so fatal to them. The rebels fought like tigers, our soldiers like lions."

To advance was impossible; the soldiers were overcome with fatigue, and the Republican army had suffered heavy losses, Marceau's division having

been especially severely handled. A bivouac on the spot was ordered.

The Catholic army was pursued to Beaupréau, which Westermann entered the same night. Had he continued the pursuit the next day instead of staying to plunder, the remnant left from Cholet might have been destroyed, for, in spite of the energy of La Rochejaquelein, the retreat of the Royalists had ended in disgraceful and headlong flight.

This remnant arrived safely at Saint-Florent on the Loire. Here were found 5,000 Republican prisoners confined in the church. The Vendean soldiers, furious at the treatment they had received from Westermann, and at the sight of their burning homesteads, gathered round the edifice and pointed their guns, charged with grape, on the unfortunate prisoners. Bonchamps, expiring of his wounds near by, heard of their intention, and at once sent Autichamp to beg of them, at his last and dying request, to spare the wretches. The Vendean immediately fell back at the name of their great chief, and the massacre was averted.

Bonchamps expired soon after at the hamlet of La Meilleraie. His noble and generous soul took its flight accompanied by the consolation that he had known how to forgive, and that, to his last wish, 5,000 victims of this unhappy war owed their lives.

“While the last moments of the Royalist chief were ennobled by an act of mercy, the triumph of the Republicans was stained by unrelenting and

uncalled-for cruelty. The towns of Beaupréau and Cholet were burnt to the ground, the inhabitants of every age and sex put to the sword.”<sup>1</sup> To whom we are to impute the blame of this it is difficult to say. The previous conduct of Kléber and Marceau, and the character we know they bore through life, excludes the possibility of participation, and absolves them from all personal blame if not from all responsibility.

After considerable difficulty the entire Vendean army, that is, what was left of it, with thousands of women and children and helpless followers, was conveyed in safety in twenty-five boats across the Loire, and escaped the ravenous vengeance of Westermann, who arrived too late, and vented his rage by devastating with fire and sword the unhappy and unoffending country around Saint-Florent.

Kléber bewailed in his report that during these two days he had lost in his division alone fourteen commanders of brigades and battalions and chiefs of staff, and a great body of veteran soldiers. But what of that, the *Bocage* had been cleared; La Vendée—at least, so it was fondly imagined—had ceased to exist, and the triumphant representatives might well write to the Convention: “A profound solitude reigns in the country recently occupied by the rebels . . . we have left behind us nothing but ashes and piles of dead.”

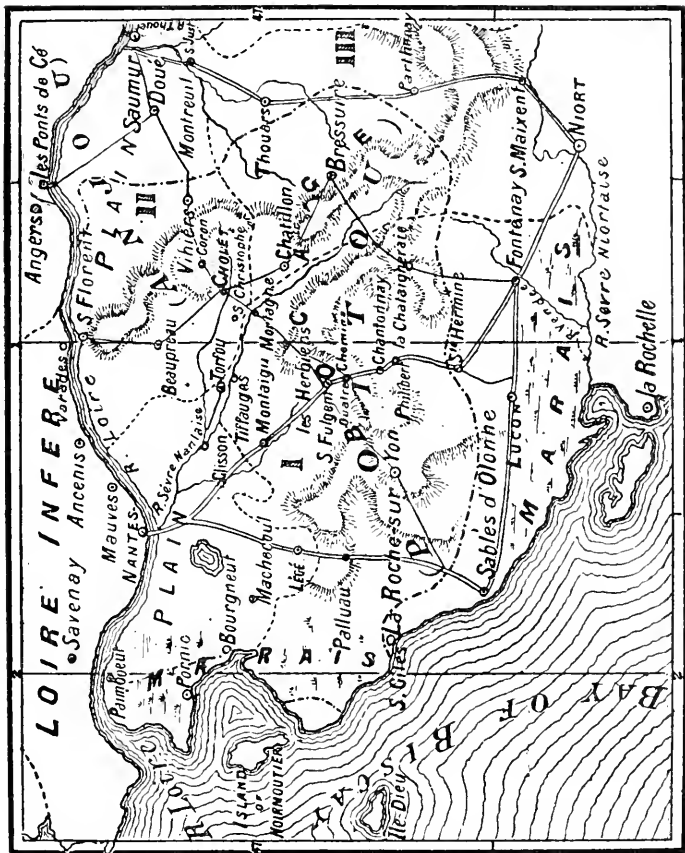
On the evening of the 18th October, on their arrival at Beaupréau, both Kléber and Marceau were promoted, by the unanimous voice of the

<sup>1</sup> Alison.

representatives, the former to the grade of a general of division, the latter to that of a general of brigade, the brevets to date from the battle of Cholet. The following was the order in Marceau's case, signed by Bourbotte, Turreau, and others, and ratified by the Convention on the 5th November, 1793 :

“The representatives of the people with the Army of the West, reunited at Beaupréau, in consideration of the courage, bravery, and military talent displayed by citizen Marceau under all circumstances and in active warfare against the Vendean rebels, and because of the pure and never-failing patriotism with which we know him to be imbued, do hereby nominate him provisionally a general of brigade, and direct that he assume the functions of one from this date, and that a copy of this be sent to the Executive Council in order that justice be at once done to a good citizen by expediting his confirmation as general of brigade.”

After Cholet, L'Echelle had kept Marceau near him as chief of his staff, in which capacity he accompanied him to Nantes. The command of the Luçon division was conferred on Canuel.



DEPARTMENTS.  
 I. La Vendée.  
 II. Maine-et-Loire.  
 III. Deux Sèvres.

Boundary of La  
 Vendée Militant  
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### CHAPTER III.

*The Campaign north of the Loire—"The rout of Laval"—Marceau in command of the advance-guard—The blockade of Dol—Battle of Antrain—Marceau as general of division and commander-in-chief ad interim—The dangers of his position.*

THE passage of the Loire by the Vendéans, carried out in view of a victorious army, without preparations and with the aid only of some twenty small boats, deserves to be ranked as a great military exploit. Well might the Republicans, on their arrival in force at Saint-Florent on the 19th October, express astonishment at seeing the royal army safe on the opposite bank. All their projects of extermination had once more fallen to the ground.

The blame rests in the first place with L'Echelle for not urging the pursuit, and, in the next, with the officer who, posted on the right bank with 10,000 men, should have defended Varades until the arrival of L'Echelle. "What a difference it would have made," wrote Beaupuy, "if our side had held Varades. All France would have been purged of rebels. The Loire would have been their grave."

If we include women and children, some 50,000 Vendéans crossed the Loire on the evening of the 18th and on the 19th October. Of these thirty to thirty-five thousand were armed men, capable still, as we shall see, of not only holding the patriot army at bay, but of inflicting on it the most crushing and humiliating defeats.

Arrived safely across the Loire, the Vendéans elected the youthful La Rochejaquelein their generalissimo, in the room of d'Elbée, mortally wounded at Cholet, and then continued their march, overcoming all opposition, along the banks of the Mayenne to Château-Gonthier and Laval. At Laval, having outmarched their pursuers, they were able to rest and re-establish order in their ranks. The object of their leaders was to occupy Rennes, where it was expected an insurrection would break out, and thousands of Bretons join the Catholic cause. In this, as in all their expectations of the north of the Loire, they were doomed to disappointment, for not only did the Bretons, with the exception of those of the Morbihan, fail to enlist under the white standard in anything like numbers, but they treated the Vendéans like wandering brigands, fearing to succour them, and refusing often to give them shelter.

The Republican army crossed the Loire in two columns, Beaupuy with the advance-guard and the Luçon division by the bridges of Cé, the rest of the army by Nantes. Kléber and Marceau, who were with L'Echelle, advised that the advance north from the Loire should be in several columns along

both banks of the Mayenne, and that the troops should be allowed to rest, and their clothing and provisions be looked to before being engaged in another active campaign. But these generals were overruled, and L'Echelle pompously ordered the army to march "majestically forth in mass" against the front of the enemy.

"Thus," says Kléber, "20,000 men, aligned along a single column, were marched out to attack a post accessible by several roads, without so much as a false attack or a diversion being attempted. It seemed most extraordinary to us, but we had to obey!"

The two advance-guards, respectively under Beaupuy and Westermann, met at Château-Gonthier on the 25th October. Westermann, rash and impetuous as ever, came up with the enemy the same evening at Croix-de-Bataille, between Entrames and Laval, and was drawn into a battle. The Vendéans, lying in ambush, were prepared for him, and, profiting by the confusion of darkness, repulsed him with loss. He retreated, however, in order, and occupied Entrames, where some heights and the line of the Joanne beyond the village afforded an excellent position. This combat was only the prelude to a more general action.

The next day L'Echelle arrived at Château-Gonthier with his entire army, 25,000 strong. Not satisfied with the position, he gave Kléber orders to push on to Villiers, three miles beyond Château-Gonthier, on the road to Laval, at the same time he withdrew Westermann from the heights of



Entrames, which the enemy immediately occupied, and, posting their guns there, opened fire on the Mayençais, who, under Beaupuy, formed the advance-guard of the Republicans.

Kléber and Marceau, the latter still acting as chief of the staff, prepared a plan of attack along both banks of the river, and advised a halt at Château-Gonthier ; but L'Echelle and the council of war, urged on by the representatives, could not be moved from their purpose of making a reconnaissance in force the next day, and thus hazarding a general engagement with the main body of the Vendean army, strongly posted on the left bank of the Mayenne.

Marceau was with the advance-guard, consisting of Beaupuy's division, when, at eleven o'clock on the morning of the 27th, the action commenced by a brisk attack on the part of the Vendéans, who had issued from Laval in force, and were deployed on the heights of Entrames and along the line of the Joanne. Marceau was wounded at the commencement of the fight, but he continued to discharge his duties, and at once communicated with Kléber, who advanced with his division to support Beaupuy, and deployed on the right and left of the road so as to extend himself as much as possible. These three generals had to bear the brunt of the attack, for L'Echelle, who had placed his whole army in one column, was unable to come to the assistance of the troops at its head, while his attempts to deploy the second division and support the left wing were useless and of no avail. He could neither

give the necessary orders, nor would the formation of the ground permit of any manœuvre.

The attack meanwhile developed rapidly. Bands of Vendean sharpshooters flung themselves on the head of the column, causing it to give way and retire in disorder. La Rochejaquelein flew through the Poitevin ranks, animating the peasants. Stofflet charged and took a whole battery, which he immediately turned against the enemy. La Rochejaquelein and Royrand pressed heavily on the centre, advancing their guns step by step against the phalanx of Mayençais, and mowing them down with close-range fire. "The Vendéans had to do with the redoubtable garrison of Mayence," says a writer, "but they fought with the courage of despair, and on no former occasion had exhibited a more enthusiastic valour." While this took place in front, Dehargues, with a column, threw himself on the Republican flank, and after a desperate struggle the Mayençais began to give way.

"And now," writes Kléber, "the rout commenced, not in my division engaged in the fight, but in that which had as yet taken no part in it. The soldier, who always has an eye at his back, seeing the first division make a half-turn to the rear, at once hastened to follow suit. Cries, exhortations, prayers are repeated in vain. Disorder reigns supreme, and for the first time I behold the soldiers of Mayence flee before an enemy. The Vendéans pursue us, and gain possession one by one of our guns, which they turn against us. We lose heavily in men."

After five hours' fighting, and at the close of day,

the approaches to Château-Gonthier are gained. But here Stofflet, with some picked troops, slips behind the Republican columns, and assails them in flank and rear, firing at fourteen paces, and then overwhelming them with bayonet charges.

Marceau, Beaupuy, and Kuhn rallied some battalions of Mayençais in the town, and, placing two cannon in position, attempted to sustain unaided the attack of the royal army on the bridges of Château-Gonthier. This only arrested its progress for a moment, for La Rochejaquelein coming up shouted to his soldiers: "What, my friends, shall the conquerors sleep out of doors, and the conquered in the town!" and throwing himself on the guns carried them, and pursued the blues across the open country far beyond the town.

Fifteen thousand soldiers fled to Rennes, Angers, and even to Nantes, whence many did not return to the army for a fortnight. It was with difficulty that Kléber and Marceau collected 7,000 men together at Lion-d'Angers, where, on the 28th October, they took up an advantageous position, covered by the river Oudon. In this action, the memorable *rout of Laval*, as it is called, the Republicans lost 12,000 men and nineteen guns, and the formidable bands of Mayence were almost annihilated, and ceased to exist hereafter as a separate corps. The defeat was the more humiliating in that only some seven or eight thousand Royalists were actively engaged, whereas L'Echelle had his entire force of 30,000 men at his back and under his orders.

As for L'Echelle himself, overwhelmed with

shame and filled with despair, he hastily resigned the command and fled to Nantes, where he ended his brief and unsuccessful career by taking his own life.

The road to Paris was now open, and nothing but the reluctance of the Vendean peasants prevented the Catholic army from marching to the gates of the capital itself.

The Army of the West reassembled at Angers on the 30th October, where it remained till the 10th November. Kléber and Marceau, distrusted by the representatives but indispensable to them, did everything in their power to repair the disaster, and to reorganize the army so as to render it fit to face once more the determined foe. When reinforced and amalgamated, this army consisted of a compact force of 17,000 men. Kléber reserved the command of the first division for himself, and confided the advance-guard, some 3,000 strong, and made up principally of Mayençais, to Marceau.

From Lion-d'Angers, on the 1st November, Marceau wrote to his friend, Constantine Maugars, asking him to come and join him: "As it seems that, in spite of the wretched state of my health, I must see the last of this campaign, and be obliged to take part in several more battles, I beg of you to let me know as soon as possible if you feel inclined to come and join me as my aide-de-camp. I will not mention the advantages to be reaped, in a military sense, from this post. They cannot be compared with those my heart will experience. Come, therefore, if you love me, or at least give me

sound reasons for your refusal. I shall await your reply with impatience. I should be delighted if you could be present at the next battle. I hope that is not far off now, and that we shall make up for our last defeat." One of Marceau's biographers has well remarked, that we do not know which to admire most in this simple letter, the tenderness of heart of the writer of it, or the patriotic ardour it displays in its very restraint.

While the Republican army recruited its strength and prepared to renew the struggle, the Royalist leaders remained idle at Fougères, divided in opinion, and uncertain what line of march to adopt. They had apportioned their forces among five grand divisions, forming together a formidable army, supported by a park of fifty-four guns of various calibre. But there were few leaders remaining in whom the Vendéans placed much confidence. At Laval, Royrand had been mortally wounded, and, soon after, De Lescure (the first husband of the Marchioness of La Rochejaquelein, whose immortal memoirs illustrate for us all the pathos and the horror of this unhappy war) succumbed to the wounds he had received at La Tremblaie.

While they hesitated, despatches arrived from England, in which the English government showed its disposition to assist the Royalists, adding that troops were ready to bear upon any point they might name. Granville, the nearest seaport town to Jersey, was selected, and a suitable reply sent back to the ministers, Pitt and Dundas. Leaving Fougères, therefore, the white army marched to

Granville by way of Dol, Pontorson, and Avranches, to co-operate with its English allies from over the sea.

The prolonged occupation of the Dol-Laval road by the Royalists had been viewed with the greatest alarm by Rossignol, now in command of the Army of the North, with his head-quarters at Rennes. He appealed to his colleagues at Angers to help him to defend this important town, pointing out, at the same time, the advantage to be gained by an amalgamation of the two armies. The representatives at Angers, anxious to avoid giving Kléber the command, at once fell in with Rossignol's views, forgetting what the army had already suffered from his ignorance and incapacity.

On the 15th November the Army of the West, led by Kléber and Marceau, entered Rennes, and Rossignol, the Jacobin goldsmith of the faubourgs of Paris, was placed in supreme command of the combined forces.

The Royalists appeared before Granville at the appointed time, and at once attacked the town. Unaccustomed to the storming of walled towns, unsupported by the English, and enfiladed by the withering fire of some vessels in the harbour, they were obliged to retire on the approach of the Cherbourg division, and, after performing prodigies of valour, to fall back on Avranches. The English expedition, under Lord Moira, appeared off the coast after this retreat had been effected. Arrived at Avranches, at the loud and persistent demands of the peasants, who longed to see their homes

again, it was resolved to return to Dol, and thence to Angers, there to secure a passage over the Loire back to La Vendée.

At Pontorson, Rossignol attempted to intercept the retreat of the Vendéans, but his general, Tribout, was driven out of the town at the point of the bayonet, and the gates of Brittany were once more open to the Catholic army. On the 19th November they occupied Dol without obstacle, and here it was thought the insurgents would be brought to bay, for the Republicans barred their way to the Loire, their right resting on Pontorson and the sea, and their left on the intrenched camp at Antrain, while Marceau, with the advance-guard, was posted at the crossing of the four roads from Rennes to Antrain, and from Fougères to Dol.

Dol was then a walled town, and consisted of a single wide street, which was the high road to Dinan. On the opposite side the road divided, one branch leading to Pontorson, the other to Antrain ; Dol lay in the angle formed by these two roads. At the council of war it was proposed by Kléber that before a general engagement was hazarded, the enemy should be blockaded in this town, their supplies cut off, and their strength sapped by frequent and harassing attacks. Rossignol and the representatives approved of this plan, which would have succeeded beyond all doubt, and put an end to a war already productive of so much misery and bloodshed.

As soon as the news of the defeat of Pontorson was received, the advance on Avranches was stayed,

and all precautions taken to maintain the post at Antrain. The 18th and 19th November were occupied in strengthening the position, and troops were sent right and left to complete the cordon, St. Malo and Dinan being occupied. On the afternoon of the 20th, however, a despatch was received from Westermann, who commanded the advance-guard on the Pontorson road, pointing out that he knew the enemy were in a miserable plight in Dol, and that if Kléber and Marceau would co-operate from Antrain, he would advance the same night from Pontorson, and it would be all over with the Catholic army, which would be utterly destroyed.

Rossignol and the representatives took fire at this despatch. Marceau was at once ordered to march with his column, and attack Dol simultaneously with Westermann, to whom a favourable reply was sent.

The Royalists, far from being in the condition Westermann had described, had taken every precaution against a surprise. "To animate the soldiers," writes an eye-witness, "the drums beat to arms. The moment the Vendéans had formed themselves at the entrance of the town, the attack began, in the midst of a dark night. The cries of the soldiers, the roll of the drums, the fire of the howitzers, casting a transient gleam over the town, the noise of the musketry and cannon, all contributed to deepen the impression made on those who expected life or death from the issue of the battle."

Westermann commenced the attack at midnight



of the 20th-21st, without awaiting the infantry division that was to support him, and without making sure of the arrival of Marceau on his left. He was opposed by 6,000 Vendéans under La Rochejaquelein, who fell on him with his usual impetuosity, compelling his column to recede to Pontorson.

Along the Dol-Antrain road Marceau led the way with 3,000 men. The Vendéans, foreseeing they would be simultaneously assailed by both roads, after beating back the attack on the left, hastened to strengthen their right, and Marceau encountered them at 4 a.m., drawn up in great force outside the town. But he never hesitated to deliver battle. The enemy far outnumbered him, but his firmness and his wise dispositions equalized the combat and the Republicans gained ground everywhere.

Marceau commenced the attack by a vigorous onslaught on the advance-guard of the insurgents, drawn up under Prince Talmont in front of the town. Stofflet was dislodged from his position in a wood on the right and took shelter in Dol. "The darkness of the night," says Madame De Lescure, who was present at the time, "and the rage of the two parties were such that in the midst of the confusion the combatants grappled hand to hand and tore each other to pieces. They even took cartridges from the same *caissons*." The retreat of Stofflet spread terror among the Vendéans, who fled, taking with them, or trampling under foot in their flight, the helpless multitude of women and children crowded together in the squares and avenues of the town. After three hours of desperate fighting Marceau

remained master of the field, and a thick fog alone prevented him from taking advantage of the confusion and pursuing the enemy into and beyond Dol. At daybreak Müller's division arrived, but the moment for securing the victory was past. La Rochejaquelein, victorious on the left, had come along the cross-roads to the aid of Prince Talmont, who, at the head of 800 men, still maintained his position with heroical courage on the right. By dint of superhuman efforts the Vendean leaders now rallied their troops and beat off the Republicans. The priests, and even the women, led by the widows of Bonchamps and De Lescure, assisted in animating the soldiers and in recalling them to their duty.

The exertions and the military skill of Marceau were all spent in vain. Müller, who was now in command, and his staff, were intoxicated, and unable to issue orders. La Rochejaquelein, taking advantage of the confusion, took up a strong position on the flank, and poured down on the Republicans, who, in their turn, were put to flight. Marceau had sent word to Kléber, asking him to come and extricate them from their plight. Kléber hastened to him, and advised him to take up a retrograde but a very strong position in the environs of Trans, which he did, after some trouble from the Vendean riflemen.

Marceau's timely dispositions, and the fact that the Vendean had themselves suffered heavily, prevented the latter from carrying the intrenchments along the Couesnon, as they might otherwise have done. They returned to Dol in solemn procession, headed by their priests, and chanting aloud their

thanks to God who had given them the victory. The main body of the Republicans, except the battalions that held Antrain, bivouacked that night in front of the woods of Trans, Marceau alone with the advance-guard returned to the moor nearer Dol, which he had occupied the morning before.

Day broke, and neither side had taken the offensive. As many of the troops, however, had taken no part in the previous encounter, the representatives, notwithstanding the experience of the preceding day, were eager to risk a second attack. In vain Kléber and Marceau pointed out to them how much more doubtful success would be after the recent check, their advice was unheeded, and a second advance ordered to commence at 10 o'clock along both roads. But Rossignol had prepared no plan of action, and had issued no detailed instructions, and it was already past midday, when a brisk cannonade roused his army. Westermann was engaged with the enemy. La Rochejaquelein, weary of his uncertain position, and anxious to take advantage of the enthusiasm of his troops, had given the signal for attack and forestalled the Republicans. A second time was Westermann defeated and forced back in disorder to Avranches, leaving all his artillery in the enemy's hands.

On their right the Vendéans met with a more obstinate resistance. The battle here lasted fifteen hours, but the issue, owing to the absence of a single and predominant will on the side of the Republicans, was never for a moment doubtful.

Kléber and Marceau, both devoured by vexation,

made a reconnaissance towards Dol. Scarcely had they reached the battlefield of yesterday, between the villages of Boussaye and Vieuville, when they came up with the Vendean advance-guard, closely followed by their army.

Soon after the engagement commenced the advance-guard of the Army of Brest took to flight, leaving Marceau to bear the entire attack unsustained. But Kléber now brought up some battalions of Mayençais, forming part of Canuel's brigade, and the two generals, taking up a strong position, showed a formidable front to the enemy, giving time to the troops in their rear to come into action. But the Vendean column that had pursued Westermann now appeared on their right flank, while Stofflet moved round the left; and Kléber, seeing his position no longer tenable, ordered a retrograde movement, which the intervention of Rossignol converted into a rapid retreat.

"Our flanks in air, our rear exposed," writes Kléber, "the greater portion of his troops in full flight, Rossignol now orders a retreat. . . . We arrive at nightfall at the bridge of Antrain, the passage of which is made in the greatest confusion. Marceau undertakes to defend this bridge with whatever soldiers he can get together, irrespective of company or battalion. But the enemy continues to advance, and, forcing the passage, converts what might have been called an orderly retreat into a fearful rout. While Marceau sustains unaided the efforts of the enemy, the other generals with the representatives are deliberating what they should do, but

when the taking of the bridge is announced, it is seen there is nothing to be done but to follow the tide and retreat to Rennes."

The intrenchments carried and Marceau dislodged, the victorious Royalists, led by their young commander, entered Antrain pell-mell at the heels of the fugitives whom the Vendean cavalry pursued for many miles along the road to Rennes. The Republican army lost 6,000 men, killed and wounded, in this battle of twenty-two hours' duration.

Arrived at Rennes, Rossignol called together the members of the council of war and admitted to them his unfitness for command. He asked them to accept his resignation and to give him only a battalion, if they wished to save the Republic. But Prieur de la Marne, the constant enemy of Kléber and Marceau, refused to accept Rossignol's offer, and insinuated that the responsibility of defeat rested not with him, but with certain generals, meaning Kléber and Marceau, who had failed to assist him with their counsels and military skill. Prieur conveniently forgot that the enemy had been engaged against the repeated warnings of the former general, and that the devoted courage of the latter had alone averted disaster.

Seeing there was no getting rid of the *sans-culotte* general, Kléber now proposed to the council that an officer should be appointed as *Commandant of all the troops acting under a General-in-chief*, that is, under the orders of Rossignol, and, effacing himself, suggested that Marceau should fill this strange post, while Westermann and Debilly should respectively

command the cavalry and artillery. The council approved of this proposition and submitted it to the military tribunal at Paris for confirmation.

Kléber had recommended Marceau because he could reckon upon his entire devotedness. "The subject was a delicate one," he explains in his memoirs, "and I was sure of raising feelings of jealousy, but the exigencies of the service outweighed all other considerations. The step once taken, I felt relieved of a great burden. I was Marceau's friend, and felt sure he would undertake no enterprise without first consulting me. He was young, active, intelligent, and full of audacious courage. Calmer than he, I felt I should always be at his elbow to restrain his ardour, should it carry him too far. We mutually agreed not to abandon each other until we had succeeded in bringing back victory to our standards."

The Vendean army had quitted Dol and Antrain, and marched by Ernée to Laval, threatening Angers, which they would be obliged to carry to secure their passage over the Loire by the bridges of Cé.

On the 28th November the council of representatives directed the main body of the Republican army to move to Châteaubriant. Marceau, with the advance-guard, arrived here on the 30th, and learnt that the Vendéans were marching on Angers. He sent two messengers in succession to Rossignol, asking whether he should succour the town, but the only reply he received was to the effect that Rossignol would be at Châteaubriant the next day. When the

representatives arrived and learnt for themselves that Angers was threatened, they asked Rossignol why troops had not been sent to the assistance of their colleagues. Rossignol laid all the blame on Marceau, who was sent for. A lively scene ensued, ending in Rossignol retiring suddenly to bed on the plea of indisposition ! “ After all,” said Prieur, in conclusion, to Marceau, “ it is less your fault than Kléber’s ; it is he who advised you, and to-morrow we will establish a tribunal to send him to the guillotine ! ”

Marceau, overcome with grief, immediately went over to Kléber’s quarters and repeated all he had heard. It was eleven o’clock at night, but Kléber roused the representatives from their sleep and demanded an explanation, which ended in the humiliation of Prieur, and led to the marching out of the army, at midnight and in intense cold, on the road to Angers, where it arrived on the evening of the next day.

Owing to the exertions of Beaupuy and Martigny, Angers no longer needed succour. The Vendean attack had failed, and the bridges of Cé were safe. Marceau made a reconnaissance in force towards the town, only to find the siege abandoned, and the Vendean in full retreat up the right bank of the Loire, still hoping to secure a passage at Saumur or Tours to their homes in the *Bocage*. At the bivouac before Angers were found the bodies of women and children, who had died of cold and hunger. They, at least, would never see those homes again.

From Angers the Republican army marched to Baugé, where it was joined by the Cherbourg division under Tilly, a reinforcement which raised its strength to 40,000, and made it once more a formidable force. The Grand Army of La Vendée, on the other hand, abandoned by its officers, harassed by the light cavalry of Westermann, enfeebled by constant marching, and decimated by disease and cold and hunger, was melting away day by day.

The Committee of Public Safety, on hearing of the defeat of Antrain, had removed Rossignol from the command, conferring it on another general even less qualified to hold it. This was Turreau, a monster whose name deserves to be mentioned in the same category with men like Marat, Couthon, and Collet-d'Herbois. Fortunately, he was at this time absent with the Army of the Pyrenees, and the Convention ordered that Marceau should act as commander-in-chief until his arrival, promoting Marceau at the same time to the rank of a general of division, the commission to bear date from the 10th November, 1793.

"The army marched immediately," says Thiers, "and from this moment everything was conducted with harmony and firmness." Beauchamp uses the same language, and does homage to the genius of Marceau. "It was under this officer," writes the Vendean historian, "that the army of the Republic dealt the most decisive blows to the Royalists. If he did not reap all the glory of the battles by which Greater Vendée was suppressed, the historian



who overlooks nothing will, in this respect at least, be just to his memory."

With his commission, Marceau received a list of officers whom the Convention directed should be dismissed. The ordinance comprised Kléber and all the Mayence generals, but allowed Marceau to avail himself of the services of Kléber, and one or two others who "might be of some service to the Republic!"

Marceau at first refused the post offered him, urging his youth and inexperience. He even wrote to his sister Emira and to the Conventionnel, Sergent, asking them to beg of the Committee to remove him from the command, which he had virtually been filling since the retreat to Rennes. What most affected Marceau, as brave as he was humane, was the terrible nature of this war. To a friend he once said: "Whenever I awake from sleep and think of the horrors of La Vendée, I am almost maddened by the awful recollections that arise, and there is then no more sleep for me."

Another objection that weighed heavily with Marceau was, that he would supersede many whom he knew to be more deserving of the command. His young and generous soul cried out against the injustice done to these men, and especially to Kléber. "What," he urged, "is my courage when compared to his!" His scruples were at length overcome by the representatives pointing out to him that Kléber would be always near him and would virtually direct the operations.

"Well, then, let it be so," said Marceau, grasping

the hand of his friend, "in accepting the title I will leave to you the actual command and the measures necessary to insure the safety of the army. As for me, I will bear the vexations and the responsibility, and my only wish will be to be allowed to lead the advance-guard in the hour of danger."

"Be easy in your mind, my friend," replied Kléber, "we will fight together, and we will be guillotined together!"

What a picture of the revolutionary era we have here! Two noble, unselfish souls linked together, thrusting aside all other issues and interests save those only that concerned the welfare of their Republic, eager to lead her armies to victory, even though the sword of hatred and jealousy were held thereby in suspense over their devoted lives!

It is both curious and sad to read to-day how the incapable boaster, Rossignol, deprived of his command, depicted these same two men in his report to Bourbotte, the Minister of War, and the Committee of Public Safety :

"You wish to know," he wrote, "what I think of Marceau? He is a petty intriguer, mixed up with the Mayençais clique, whose ambition and self-love will one day be their ruin. I have followed his career and studied him closely enough to be able to form, *with my great good sense*, a just estimate of his worth. He was the friend and the neighbour of that scoundrel Pétion . . . he has moreover served in the *ci-devant* Germanic legion, whose principles were more than suspected. The observations of Representative Prieur, who is here, tally

with mine. In a word, I am compelled to say that Marceau is a source of anxiety to the patriots, whose society, moreover, he shuns. As for Kléber, during the last week he has been self-absorbed. He has nothing to say to the council now. . . . He is a good soldier, but he makes a trade of war, and he serves the Republic *as he would serve a despot.*"

Similar charges were made in secret against other generals, and the soldier was placed in opposition to his officers. "The soldiers are all good men, but their chiefs are worthless," runs the report, "and it is in the name of the country that I invite you to remedy these defects."

Many of the representatives followed the example of Rossignol, and, "in the name of the country," laid serious accusations against Kléber and Marceau, who replied to these calumnies with their accustomed dignity, restraint, and pride.

"In this manner were treated those great men, who laboured night and day to preserve the unity of their country. As a reward, they were obliged to defend their lives at once against the Vendéans and against the scaffold!"

## CHAPTER IV.

*Battles of Le Mans and Savenay—The War of La Vendée brought to a close—Triumph at Nantes—The sans-culotte General Turreau assumes the command—His treatment of Marceau—Illness and leave of absence.*

FOILED in their endeavour to open a passage by the bridges of Cé, and finding any attempt to repass the Loire at Saumur and Tours hopeless, because of the measures taken by Marceau, the Vendéans now realized their desperate situation. In their extremity the firmness of La Rochejaquelein once more came to their aid, and it was resolved to alter the destination of the army, and move by La Flèche upon Le Mans, where the co-operation of the Royalists of Maine might reasonably be expected.

The retreat began by Baugé and the castle of Jarzé, Westermann, supported by Marceau, following close on the heels of the numerous Vendean rear-guard, commanded by the brave Piron. Arrived at La Flèche on the 9th December, the Vendéans found the bridge over the Loir destroyed, and a force of 4,000 men lining the opposite bank, prepared to defend the passage. Leaving the rear-guard to stand firm against Westermann, and taking

300 horsemen, with 300 more infantry mounted behind them, with him, La Rochejaquelein forded the river higher up at Sainte-Colombe, and appeared suddenly before the town at dusk. The blues, surprised and taken in rear, fled, panic-stricken, by the road to Le Mans. La Rochejaquelein repaired the bridge and threw himself on Westermann with 3,000 men, driving him back with great loss on to Müller's division, sent to support him. This glorious success astonished the Republicans, and well it might, for had not Marceau arrived with the Cherbourg division, the events before Dol would have been repeated.

On the 10th December, at daybreak, the white army evacuated La Flèche, and La Rochejaquelein appeared the same evening before Le Mans, which he occupied after a severe action with its garrison. The Republican divisions, the designs of the enemy being unknown, had been scattered in all directions. On arrival within five miles of Laval, Marceau had divided his army into three columns, to which he gave the routes of Vendôme, Tours, and Angers respectively, to march concentrically on the bridge of Pontlieu, outside Le Mans. Müller, preceded by Westermann, commanded the left, Kléber the right, towards the Loire, and Tilly the centre.

On the 11th December Marceau wrote from La Flèche to the Minister of War, detailing the steps taken to follow up the enemy and to prevent it from crossing the Loire into La Vendée. "From these details," the letter continues, "you will see, citizen-minister, that we have adopted a system of

warfare in which foresight plays a part equally with force, and which must inevitably lead to the ruin of the robbers, at the same time that it does not expose us to the danger of a great reverse. . . . Under this system the cavalry is incessantly in motion, with the infantry in vigilant support. . . . The enemy has taken the direction of Le Mans. They are being actively pursued. To-morrow the entire army will take up a position near Le Mans. . . . If the Army of the North would only arrive in time from Alençon, the war would be finished."

The first letters of Marceau as general-in-chief bear the impress of a mind still young and artless ; at the same time they are imbued with a profound sentiment of duty, and exhibit certain qualities which raise Marceau far above the mere *brave* or *beau sabreur* he is sometimes falsely depicted to have been. The language of the letters, though often written in haste and on the field of battle, is firm, elevated, and patriotic, and always to the point, as that of despatches should invariably be.

On the 12th December the scattered Republican divisions were united, under the orders of Marceau, at Foulletourte, previous to an advance on Le Mans. Each division had its instructions, and its allotted place in the line of advance. The end of this prolonged tragedy of civil war now drew nigh.

The town of Le Mans, situated on the high road from Alençon to Tours, occupied a strategic point of some importance. It was, moreover, rich and abundant in resources. It lies on the left bank of

the Sarthe, above its junction with the Huisne, which runs along its southern suburbs, and protects with its strong flood the town on this side. Just beyond the bridge of the Huisne, where the roads from Tours and La Flèche unite, is the village of Pontlieu, the approaches to which are protected by heights flanked by pine-woods. The great road from Paris to Angers passes by to the south-east, within a league of the town.

The exhausted Catholic army, mustering only 12,000 fighting men, was in no condition to resist the formidable columns now converging on Le Mans, and yet their defence of the town was stubborn and heroic. They had taken up a strong position facing the roads by which the Republican army must advance. The streets of Le Mans were cut up and barricaded. The bridge over the Huisne was covered by artillery and protected by a line of intrenchments, while, on the right of the heights before Pontlieu, La Rochejaquelein had placed the bravest of his troops, under Stofflet, in ambush in the pine-woods, between the Sarthe and the road from La Flèche.

Informed, on the morning of the 12th, that the Republican columns were moving on Le Mans by the roads from Tours and Angers, La Rochejaquelein sounded the assembly, and at once marched against the enemy. Westermann was overthrown at the first shock, and fell back on Müller's division. Supported by Müller, he again advanced on the height before Pontlieu. Taken in flank, and vigorously charged in front, these generals

were soon repulsed with loss. Müller's division disbanded, and, with the exception of some battalions, fled back as far as Foulletourte.

Marceau, hearing at Foulletourte of the defeat of Westermann and Müller before Le Mans, at once set out to join them. At Armage he overtook the Cherbourg division commanded by Tilly, and arrived with it in time to avert a disaster.

The division of Cherbourg, with the grenadiers of Armagnac in front, advanced boldly, eager to measure their strength for the first time with the enemy. Marceau hastened to commence the combat, and himself directed all the movements. The sight of him passing along the ranks inspired all with confidence, for his valour, especially since Dol, was known to the whole army. "I will fight," he is reported to have said to his soldiers at Rennes, "if I have only thirty men at my back."

The Vendéans had advanced along the road, but, with the aid of the Cherbourg division, the remainder of Müller's division, and a few brave Mayençais, Marceau, after some severe fighting, drove them back to their original position on the Huisne. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the Vendéans being thrown into confusion on the left, Stofflet's division was isolated, and obliged to abandon the pine-woods on the right. Such was the impetus and directness of Marceau's attack, with Westermann leading the way, that many of the Vendéans abandoned the intrenchments and entered Le Mans in great disorder, the remainder being rallied with difficulty before Pontlieu by the



exertions and authority of La Rochejaquelein and Stofflet.

Night was now approaching, and Marceau ordered Westermann and Tilly to halt and take up a defensive position in front of Pontlieu, and await the arrival of Kléber, thus deferring the attack on Le Mans itself until the next day. Marceau, at the same time, handed to Westermann a letter from the Conventionnel Bourbotte, reproaching him for having compromised the army by his imprudent audacity, and warning him, if he valued his head, not to engage the enemy again, but to confine himself to his reconnoitring duties.

After reading the letter, Westermann said to Marceau :

“The best position, in spite of the threats of Bourbotte, is in the town itself. Let us make the most of our good fortune.”

“You play for high stakes, my *brave*,” replied Marceau, grasping Westermann’s hand ; “but never mind, advance, and I will support you.”

Marceau immediately ordered the Cherbourg division to support Westermann, and the attack on Le Mans was begun.

It is 5 o’clock and the sun has set. Westermann, followed by the grenadiers of Armagnac, advances on Le Mans in perfect silence. While the cavalry swim or ford the Huisne, the advance-guard of the Cherbourg division forces all the intrenchments which mask the approaches to the bridge, and form up in line of battle in the alleys of Pontlieu. The charge is now sounded, and with

a rush the bridge and its defences are carried, and the Royalists in full flight. They then fight at the entrance of the town, until at length the Vendean general, his officers and soldiers, renouncing all hope, suffer themselves to be carried along in the rout, which had been long begun.

Marceau advanced his troops steadily through the town; but half-way up the streets he was met by a murderous fire that checked even the audacious Armagnacs. La Rochejaquelein had established batteries down all the avenues emerging from the Grande Place, and had placed sharpshooters in the adjoining houses, and his formidable dispositions effectually prevented any further progress.

At 9 p.m., Marceau, without ceasing his fire, called a halt. His intention was to surround the town so as to prevent the escape of the enemy towards the Loire, and at the same time to protect his right flank, which was in danger of being circumvented by the Vendéans. He despatched a column to take possession of the road from Paris on his right, moved up the guns taken from the Vendéans in front, in support of Westermann, and lined with infantry all the streets abutting on the great square, now become the headquarters and the last rallying-point of the Vendean army.

It was a wild night and bitterly cold. A terrible fusillade, broken only by discharges of artillery, was kept up on both sides in spite of the darkness that enveloped all. Each side maintained its ground.

Uncertain of the enemy, and unacquainted with

Le Mans and its surroundings, Marceau had already sent for assistance to Kléber and to the representatives, pointing out his precarious position. Prieur and Bourbotte replied, "We received your letter on the way. Troops are hurrying forward to your succour. Hold fast, and we shall be with you."

Kléber had responded to his friend's appeal since midnight, and was hastening forward in spite of fatigue and bad roads. On receipt of Marceau's letter, Kléber, turning to his aide-de-camp, Savary, remarked: "Marceau is young. He has made a mistake and must be made to feel it, but we must hasten to help him out of his difficulty."

The risk incurred by Marceau before Le Mans has been exaggerated. His position there, of the true nature of which Kléber was ignorant, with the Sarthe on his left, and the road to Paris secured on his right, it would have been impossible for the enemy to have turned, and Kléber should have known that it was the duty of the main body to support what was after all only a strong advance-guard, in action, rather than to expect the latter to fall back on the former.

But the victory was already won. Confusion had spread among the Vendean ranks, and the streets were blocked with their dead bodies and with abandoned vehicles and wounded horses. La Roche-Jaquelein and the chiefs realized that the battle was lost, and thought only of the means of retreat.

Meanwhile the fight in the streets continues. A handful of Vendean, devoted to death, serve the batteries and mow down the ranks of the patriots.

At length, after midnight, both sides are wearied out, the firing ceases, and each is content to watch the other until daybreak.

Kléber arrived before dawn with the first division, and Marceau's first care was to relieve by fresh troops those of Tilly and Westermann, utterly worn out after their six hours of incessant combat with the foe. With the exception of a few thousand men who still manned the guns or occupied the houses in the principal square and its outlets, the Vendéans had already evacuated the town during the night. At 7 o'clock the charge was once more sounded, and the attack renewed at all points. A bayonet charge followed. Nothing could resist this supreme effort of the Republicans, and the mighty crowd of Vendéans was forced out of the town and took to headlong flight along the road to Laval.

In vain La Rochejaquelein assembled 1,500 men to check the advance of Marceau's victorious columns. He was wounded, overthrown, and borne along the tide of terrified fugitives. Eight hundred brave men alone maintained their ground to the very last, and were cut down almost to a man by Westermann and his hussars, who carried on the pursuit ten miles along the road to Laval.

At 8 o'clock in the morning the battle ceased, and the butchery began. It was no longer a struggle, but a bloody orgie, in which the Republican soldiers, urged on by the representatives of the people, lost all self-control, and defied all the efforts of their generals to restrain them.

"Ten thousand soldiers, and an equal number of

women and children," says Alison, whose account is perhaps a little exaggerated, "perished under those relentless swords . . . youth, grace, rank, and beauty were alike disregarded; and the vast crowd which had flocked together to avoid destruction, perished under the incessant discharges of grape-shot, or the platoons of the musketry, under the eyes of the Commissioners of the Convention."

Marceau and Kléber, groaning in spirit at the sight they saw, set themselves in vain to oppose this outrageous abuse of victory, deliberately advised and carried out by some of the *sans-culotte* representatives, accustomed to the shambles of Paris. At length, to stop the massacre and pillage, Marceau caused the assembly to be sounded, and marched all the soldiers he could recall to their standards out of Le Mans, and thus diminished, if he did not altogether dissipate, the chaos and the awful discord of horrors that had prevailed within the town.

According to an eye-witness, Marceau and Kléber rode through the scene of desolation profoundly moved and bathed in tears, rescuing individually many women and children from the hands of the brutal soldiery. Among those rescued from death by Marceau, alas! for a few days only, was the young and beautiful Vendean, Angélique des Mesliers, "whose touching history," writes M. Parfait, "has been so often reproduced, and under such a variety of forms. Romance and the stage, the painter and the engraver, have each in their own way made it their own, not, however, without distorting some of the facts." We leave the consideration of

this, one of the most interesting and widely-known incidents in the life of the young Republican general, to the pages of another chapter. The subject, though in itself so tragic, and arising out of the capture of Le Mans and the subsequent massacre, demands that we should deal with it apart from the noise of battle and from the incense of holocausts of victims of an indiscriminate and needless slaughter.

Before leaving Le Mans, Marceau despatched a letter to the Minister of War, giving an account of the battle.<sup>1</sup> From Laval, two days later, he sent a second despatch on the same subject.<sup>2</sup> Both letters are marked by a simplicity and modesty characteristic of the writer, and should be read for an unvarnished and straightforward summary of the events before Le Mans. In the second letter Marceau mentions "the horrible butchery" that ensued, and even Westermann, in his *Memoirs*, has expressed himself in similar terms. It is necessary to mention this because the massacre has been denied by more than one authority, including even Savary, the chief of Marceau's staff, and at that time acting as aide-de-camp to Kléber.

As for the victory of Le Mans, its crushing effect on the Vendéans cannot easily be exaggerated. "The defeat of Le Mans," says Madame de Lescure, who was present, and witnessed the battle in the streets, and shared in the disastrous retreat, "cost the lives of more than 15,000 men. It was not in

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, No. I.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, No. II.

the battle the greatest number died ; many were crushed to death in the streets ; others, wounded and sick, remained in the houses and were massacred. Some died in the ditches and in the fields, or on the roadside. A number reached Alençon, where they were taken, and conducted to the scaffold." And again : " Such was the deplorable defeat of Le Mans, in which the Vendean army received its death-blow."

Such of the Royalists as escaped from Le Mans re-assembled at Laval under La Rochejaquelein, and then, marching night and day, arrived at Ancenis on the 16th December, when they again attempted the passage of the Loire.

Owing to the precautions taken by Marceau to protect both banks of the river, they were again foiled in their endeavour. La Rochejaquelein with a few soldiers crossed over to the left bank to seize some boats which lay there loaded with hay. While employed in clearing the boats he was attacked by a Republican patrol and compelled to take refuge in the neighbouring woods ; at the same time a gun-boat came up before Ancenis and sank all the rafts that had been made and floated by the Vendéans on the right bank. Thus, at the very moment when his skill and resolution were needed most, the Vendean army was separated from its general and deprived of its last hope. They were now pressed by the hussars, who had arrived at Ancenis, and resolved to retreat to Brittany through Nort and Rennes. But they knew their last hour was at hand. " Nothing now remained but death."

Marceau, as above mentioned, had taken all measures after Le Mans to prevent the enemy from crossing the river. He warned the commandants of Saumur, Angers, and Nantes, caused both banks of the Loire to be patrolled, and despatched Müller with a strong column to Angers with orders so to dispose his troops as to effectually prevent the enemy from repassing the Loire into La Vendée. Westermann meanwhile continued the pursuit, while Marceau followed more leisurely with the main body of his army.

On the 16th December he left Laval for Craon. Here he again wrote to the Minister of War, informing him of the intentions of the enemy and the improbability of their being able to cross the river at Ancenis or elsewhere. "I expect a battle near Ancenis," he writes; "I even think that the enemy, now at bay, will engage me in advance to protect their work (of constructing rafts to cross over to the left bank). I am preparing to give them a warm reception. Whatever happens, you may trust to my doing my utmost both to retain your confidence and to insure the triumph of the cause of liberty and equality."

Turreau, the general appointed in the room of L'Echelle, had now arrived at Angers; but, for reasons to be hereafter given, he did not think fit to relieve Marceau and assume the command.

On the 18th December Marceau advanced to Saint-Julien, beyond Châteaubriant, on the road to Ancenis. He here learnt of the enemy's failure to cross the Loire, and of their intention to make for



Rennes with a final view to entering Morbihan and Lower Brittany. He, in consequence, ordered a retrograde movement to Châteaubriant to cover Rennes, and prevent the enemy from marching round his left flank by way of Nort and Derval. From Châteaubriant he wrote to the Minister of War, explaining the necessity for this movement, which the representatives were inclined to carp at. "One more victory," the letter concludes, "and there will be an end to the rebellion." He also wrote to Bonnaire, who was in command of the Army of the North, now advancing from Alençon, and directed him to move towards Rennes, the probable destination of the Vendéans.

Arrived at Nort, the Royalists found the way to Rennes blocked before them. They marched therefore to Blain, intending to reach Morbihan by a more direct route. They were scarcely in a condition to risk another battle. Despair had seized them ever since their failure to recross the Loire at Ancenis. Their army was dispersing fast. Some of the troops concealed themselves in the country, while others went up and down the banks of the river seeking a passage. Many, including 150 cavalry, surrendered themselves to a false amnesty treacherously held out to them by the Republican commissaries, and were taken to Nantes, where they were put to death by Carrier and his agents. Hardly 10,000 could be induced to follow the standards, and of these only 6,000 or 7,000 were armed.

By a flank move on Derval and Blain, Marceau

had again prevented the Vendéans from entering Morbihan. But they had taken up a strong position behind Blain, and resting on an old but strong château, and easily repulsed the light troops of Westermann, who, as usual, engaged the enemy without waiting for his supports. On the 21st December Kléber arrived at Blain, and reported to Marceau that the enemy's troops were drawn up in array of battle along the river and on the heights behind the town. Marceau, whom bad roads had delayed, prepared for battle, but rain and snow came on, and, soon after, night, and all were obliged to rest on their arms. Next day, Kléber advanced in the centre, Westermann on the left, and Tilly on the right ; but the enemy had evacuated the town in the middle of the night, and had retreated, under cover of a heavy fall of snow, to Savenay, a large town situated on a height to the left of the road from Nantes to Roche-Bernard, and capable of being defended.

On the 22nd December Marceau passed through Blain, and arrived before Savenay on the evening of the same day. The advance-guards of the two armies at once engaged, and a brisk cannonade was kept up on both sides. The representatives, Prieur and Turreau, seeing the advance-guards in position, were eager to bring on a general attack ; but Marceau remained firm, and continued on the defensive.

A thick fog now arose, and added to the darkness of the night. It was bitterly cold. The snow lay like a shroud around the combatants. The dis-

charges of musketry and cannon continued, although each side was ignorant of the position of the other. One Republican battalion began to waver, and it needed the presence of Marceau, Kléber, and Beaupuy to restore confidence. At length the musketry fire ceased on both sides, the troops bivouacked on the field of battle, and a desultory cannonade alone broke at intervals the silence of the freezing night.

On the eve of battle, Marceau received a letter from Turreau, who, as we have seen, had already arrived at Angers. Turreau reproached Marceau for not having rendered him any account of his operations, and for not awaiting his orders. With the advice of Kléber, Marceau, who was vexed and irritated, replied as follows : " I am before Savenay. To-morrow at dawn I intend to attack and destroy the enemy. If you wish to see the end of the war, come quickly."

At break of day Marceau proceeded to put into execution the purport of his reply to Turreau, by sounding the assembly, and ordering a general advance against the enemy. All his dispositions were carefully made and developed, and the march of the columns was marked by the utmost precision and order. Canuel commanded the left and Kléber the right, while Marceau himself, assisted by Tilly, took charge of the centre.

The battle began furiously. Marigny, at the head of the bravest Vendéans, precipitated himself three times against the division of Tilly. Fleuriot, Lyrot, Talmont, Piron, and other chiefs performed

prodigies of valour. Long and with heroical resolution they held the immense columns brought against them in check. But all their efforts were in vain, for while Marceau and Tilly drove in their centre, Westermann, Kléber, and Beaupuy, filing over the heights behind Savenay, turned their position from the west, and Canuel was equally successful on the left.

Fleuriot succeeded in cutting his way through the Republican columns, and gained the woods with a part of the army, the remainder with Lyrot retired into the town, now penetrated on all sides. The fight here was terrible, and did not cease until Lyrot had fallen, and the Vendéans had expended their last cartridge and cannon-shot. Marceau and Kléber, meeting in the town, and having no cavalry with them, formed a troop with the members of their staff, and charged and finally overthrew the enemy.

Each division now pursued the Vendéans by a different route. But the Vendean rear-guard continued to fight with unshaken bravery, protecting their retreat on the road to Guérande, where Marigny stopped his cannon in a small wood, and began a second battle, which lasted an hour, and gave the fugitives time to escape. Two hundred Vendean cavalry saved themselves in the marshes of Montoir, some 1,200 infantry surrendered, and the remainder plunged into the forest of Gâvre, whence they were able to reach Morbihan and Brittany. But the greater portion had perished, after a resistance truly heroical, under the fire and

the swords of the Republicans. "I saw and observed them well," wrote Beaupuy to Merlin de Thionville, after examining the bodies of the slain, "I recognized in their countenances the same stern expression and invincible resolution as after Cholet and Laval. By their appearance and looks they wanted nothing of soldiers but the dress. Troops who have beaten such countrymen may well hope to conquer other nations. If I am not mistaken, this war of brigands and peasants, so much ridiculed and despised, has been one of the severest in which the Republic has been engaged. I now feel that it will be mere child's play for us with all our other enemies."

Marceau was justified in saying to the Minister of War in his despatch dated from Montoir after the battle,<sup>1</sup> that if this battle was not the most bloody, it was the most memorable that had been fought since the commencement of hostilities.

Well might Marceau say : "The war of La Vendée is at length over on the right bank of the Loire." The defeat of Savenay sounded the death-knell of the Royalist cause. The Vendean army was destroyed and the struggle finished between Greater Vendée and the Republic. It is true that the sanguinary measures adopted, after the exit of Marceau from the scene, the infernal columns of his successor, Turreau, and the *noyades* of Carrier perpetuated a guerilla war which long consumed the vitals and paralysed the forces of the Republic ; but henceforth the civil strife in the West of France assumes a

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, No. III.

different aspect, and the safety and existence of the new republic are insured and never more in doubt or danger.

To Marceau and the generals who seconded his efforts is due the merit of this achievement. Their great military talents, once left unshackled, speedily brought to a close an insurrection that had cost France so much of her precious life-blood, and the desolation of what had once been her happiest rural provinces.

While these generals broke the power of La Vendée in 1793, it was left to Hoche, who resembled Marceau so closely in many of the noblest traits of his character and genius, to complete three years later the pacification of the country and to proclaim to its inhabitants in ever-resounding words: "Peasants, return to your cottages! we will respect your priests. Go, and pray to your God in peace!"

The National Convention declared in its decrees that the Army of the West had deserved well of the country. It is doubtful whether posterity will altogether ratify this decree. The Republican army had outrageously abused its victories. "This," says the impartial Beauchamp, "may be ascribed to the evil times, and the ferocity of those whose courage consisted in massacring the disarmed and suppliant foe. But how are we to distinguish the innocent from the guilty? On the other hand, who would dare to rise up in judgment against such men as Marceau and Kléber, whose memory even envy and party malice have learned to respect. These men must have groaned in spirit over the revolting excesses

they witnessed, without reaping any advantage from their numerous successes. The authority of the generals did not in fact extend at that period beyond the boundaries of their own military camps."

The active struggle over, Marceau established temporary cantonments throughout the seat of the late war. He so arranged the garrisons that while both banks of the Loire were protected, an impenetrable barrier was raised between Greater and Lesser La Vendée, between the North and the South. Lastly, he sent Tilly's division to Haxo, who had asked for reinforcements, to aid in the reconquest of the island of Noirmoutiers.

The troops that had taken part in the war, though in excellent spirits and now in a high state of discipline, were much in need of rest. Disease, exposure, and forced marches, had thinned their ranks. Of the 15,000 soldiers comprised in the Army of the West one half filled the hospitals, while a greater portion of the remainder were rendered unfit for service through skin and other diseases.

After the battle of Savenay a portion of the army of the Republic entered Nantes in triumph. The people went out to meet the generals with crowns and garlands in their hands. The town was illuminated, and a splendid fête organized, at which Marceau and his generals were presented with civic crowns and congratulatory addresses, and hailed as saviours of the Republic, much to the disgust of Turreau and other representatives who were likewise present.

At length, on the 26th December, the *sans-culotte*

general Turreau took over the command of the Army of the West from Marceau. The next day the two generals met at the house of Representative Carrier, and a lively scene ensued. Marceau, who was not likely to forget an injury easily, demanded an explanation of Turreau's conduct towards him and for the letters he had thought fit to write to him and concerning him. Turreau replied that an officer of the army should respect his general-in-chief. "It was your duty then," retorted Marceau, "to have come and performed your part as such in the presence of the enemy. A brave man would have hastened to join us ; you concealed yourself during the days of danger. You must understand that up to the time you asked me to hand over the charge to you we remained equals." Here ended the interview, but it was not without its consequences to Marceau.

In Turreau, in fact, both Marceau and Kléber found an enemy more dangerous than Rossignol, because more vain, ambitious, and imperious. He at once disarranged all Marceau's plans for the safety and pacification of the country, and forbade Tilly to co-operate in the attack on Noirmoutiers. He followed up these acts, whose only consequence was the creation of a new war in La Vendée, by writing a series of false reports to the Committee of Public Safety against both Marceau and Kléber.

His first act on assuming command had been to order these two generals to Châteaubriant, where they were placed in charge of a mere handful of troops, and continually harassed by petty and vexa-



tious orders. On one occasion Marceau received an order from Turreau's headquarters to levy contributions in and around Châteaubriant. Marceau returned the first order with a note that it had been probably sent to him by mistake. But the order was repeated with significant threats in case of disobedience. To this Marceau sent the following reply, which put a stop once for all to Turreau's hectoring :

“The order of the Committee of Public Safety does not apply to me. During my tenure of office as commandant and throughout the period of war I have never levied contributions. The responsibility, of which you so frequently make mention, has nothing alarming about it for those who, in their desire to do their duty, devote all their time to it and keep an upright heart. I am one of this number, and, as there is nothing you can reproach me for, I have in consequence nothing to fear.”

Brief but brave words that portray for us a fearless young spirit, bold and self-reliant because of the consciousness of its own purity of purpose, and of a life consecrated to duty.

The two friends, Marceau and Kléber, though in exile, enjoyed the repose at Châteaubriant, and spent many happy hours together. It was at Châteaubriant also that Marceau received from the Council-General of his native city a copy of the record of its proceedings, thanking him for having saved the department of the Eure-et-Loir from a Vendean invasion, and recognizing his zeal and valour at the head of the two Republican armies. This acknow-

ledgment by his fellow-citizens of his services must have been very dear to Marceau, and counter-balanced, if possible, the neglect they had met with from other quarters, not to mention the infamous accusations of insubordination and lukewarmness in the cause of the Republic brought against him in secret by his enemy Turreau.

Through the exertions of Kléber, backed by the certificates of doctors and surgeons, Marceau, after some spiteful opposition on the part of Turreau, obtained leave of absence from the army. For two days he was at death's door, and his condition caused the greatest anxiety to his friend Kléber, who nursed him through his illness. Marceau was relieved of his duties by Kléber, and on the 19th January, being even then far from convalescent, he left Châteaubriant for Rennes. From that day his connection both with the Army of the West and with Greater and Lesser La Vendée virtually ceases, and he returns to these scenes of civil strife no more.

## CHAPTER V.

*Angélique des Mesliers — Marceau at Rennes — Agathe Leprêtre.*

WE have now to deal with one of the most interesting episodes in the life of Marceau, reference to which has been briefly made in the foregoing chapter, his efforts, namely, to save from death a young Vendéenne, after the defeat of Le Mans.

“It was at Le Mans,” says Chardon, “that the friend and rival of Kléber, he who was to fall ere long at Altenkirchen, *young in years, but old in glory*, saved Angélique des Mesliers on that bloody day, the 13th December, 1793.”

There was, and may still be, in the museum of Le Mans, a picture representing the defeat of the Vendéans. The principal group in the centre consists of Marceau and his staff saving the fair Royalist in the Place des Halles. All around the group is the havoc and confusion of war. Angélique des Mesliers and her saviour stand out in full relief from the chaos that environs them. She is kneeling, pale, scared, her fair hair dishevelled ; with outstretched arms she implores Marceau, who has arrived before her at the head of some *chasseurs à*

*cheval*, to save her from the ruffianly soldiers. Marceau wears the elegant costume of a colonel of hussars, which sets off his tall and elegant figure. In the heat of the battle he has lost his shako. With one hand he reins in his steed, the other is stretched out to shield the fair young fugitive before him.

We have in this picture the romantic aspect of this episode, an aspect so often reproduced in drama and story, and popularly accepted. But, in truth, there is very little in the facts themselves of the nature of the romance we ordinarily love to weave. The story of Angélique des Mesliers is more piteous in its moving woe than that of Cordelia, more solemn, in the lesson it teaches us, than that of Antigone. For her fate illustrates the fate of thousands of her sisters at this period ; it is an epitome of the cruel war of La Vendée.

It was on his departure on horseback from Le Mans on the afternoon of the 13th December, that Marceau met Angélique in the Place des Halles, whither she had been pursued by a party of soldiers, whose intentions we can gather from what had already been enacted in Le Mans since the defeat of the Vendéans. Marceau rescued her from the soldiers and sent her in charge of two grenadiers to the chief of his staff, Adjutant-General Savary, who had not yet left the temporary headquarters of the army. Savary questioned the prisoner and learnt her name, and that she was from Montfauçon, in the *bocage* of La Vendée. She further explained that she had been separated from her parents and

brother in the confusion of the battle, and feared they had all perished. She did not wish, she said, to survive them, and begged that she might at once be led out and shot. Savary reasoned with the young girl, and succeeded in calming and reassuring her. As he was himself about to leave the town, he placed the fugitive in Marceau's cabriolet, the only vehicle ready at hand at the time. In this she was conveyed, suitably escorted, to Varges, and the next day to Laval. At Laval, Savary found her a safe hiding-place, first with a woman who faithfully attended to all her wants, and next with an old curé, who lived in a secluded locality outside the town.

To each, then, is due the praise for this generous act of pity. To Marceau, for having first saved the life and protected the honour of Angélique at a most critical moment ; to Savary, for having taken all measures necessary for her further safety.

That Angélique herself looked upon Marceau as the principal instrument of her salvation is proved by the fact that to him alone she addressed her expressions of gratitude, if not of love. In a letter to her mother, which we shall quote later, she distinctly names Marceau as her saviour, and in her last moments, as we shall see, she still thinks of him alone, and is anxious he should know by some outward token that she was grateful to him to the very end.

If anything were wanting to convince us of the part played by Marceau in this tragedy, the following note, written in his own rapid handwriting, and

preserved among the archives of Laval, would suffice to fill the gap and remove our doubts :

“Citizeness des Mesliers,” runs the document, “a native of Nantes, but residing usually at Mont-fauçon (in the department of the Maine-et-Loire), having declared to us that her mother had compelled her to accompany her with the army of rebels and afterwards in their passage of the Loire, now surrenders herself to us, and abandons the rebel army, and wishes henceforth to live as a good citizen. She asks for the present certificate to insure her safety. I affirm that the citizeness above-named came and surrendered herself of her own accord at my headquarters on the 22nd of the month Frimaire, in the 2nd year of the Republic.”

The 22nd Frimaire of that year corresponds to the 12th December, 1793, that is, the voluntary surrender, in itself a generous fiction, is antedated and made to appear by a pious fraud, which only shows the ingenious humanity of the young general, as though it had taken place on the eve instead of, as we know, on the afternoon of the battle, and after the defeat of the Vendéans.

“The perusal of these lines,” says M. Henri Chardon, “makes us admire all the more the nobility of Marceau’s soul.”

And here we must recall for a moment the influence of that sister to whom Marceau owed so great a debt of nature. For, this act of humanity is traceable to that influence, however remote. In writing an account of the rescue and of his victory to Emira, Marceau has himself recorded as follows :

“At that moment it occurred to me that she was of your sex, and I thought that perhaps she too had a brother who loved her!”

After his arrival at Laval, Marceau, pre-occupied with the care of his army, had forgotten all about his prisoner. On being reminded of her, he at once paid her a visit in her place of refuge in company with Kléber. He then noticed, as he subsequently told his brother-in-law Sergent, that she was in the spring-time of her life, and wondrously beautiful. Her language, her manners, and her timid modesty, all betokened that she belonged to a family, the male members of which must have held high rank in the Vendean army.

Kléber, too, has thus described Angélique in his memoirs : “Never have I seen a woman more beautiful and more shapely, and in every respect more interesting. She was scarcely eighteen years of age.”

On the 16th December Marceau left Laval in pursuit of the remnant of the Vendean army. He never saw Angélique des Mesliers again.

Before we describe the circumstances of her martyrdom we must attempt to answer a question which has often been asked. Was there any love between these two young creatures, between the youthful, humane, and victorious general of the Republic and the beautiful Royalist of tender years and noble birth?

We have positively nothing to prove that the feelings of Marceau towards the woman he had rescued ever deepened from sympathy and pity

into love. All we know is that he shed bitter tears of regret when he first learnt that, after all, he had failed to save her. The memory of her fate saddened the remainder of his life, and whenever the incident was afterwards referred to in his presence and hearing he was strongly agitated and often moved to tears. The case of Angélique is different, and it is more than probable that, with her, gratitude rose to affection, and friendship ripened into love. "It is quite credible," says M. Chardon, "if we recall the appearance of Marceau at this period as he has been represented to us in the engravings of Sergent and Souhait, or by the chisel of Préault. And it will be admitted that this general of twenty-four years, with his picturesque costume set off by dolmen and fluttering scarf, with his tall and upright figure, . . . his vehement nature and pure soul, and, above all, with the aureole of the protector around him, was not ill qualified to inflame with love a young and noble girl, who, moreover, had only her heart to offer in payment for the debt of gratitude she owed him." Well might she, without forgetting what she owed to her cause, love the young Republican general, who knew how to be merciful to his enemies, and whose hands were pure of the blood of his prisoners.

But this love, if it ever existed, remains an enigma to this day. Its mystery was promptly buried in the grave. The guillotine rudely shattered in pieces this silent betrothal of the heart.

When Marceau provided an asylum and a safe-conduct for Angélique he had not reckoned on the



cunning and atrocious cruelty of the Revolutionary Committee, or of the Military Commission set up in Laval by Commissaries Prieur and Turreau the day after his departure from Laval.

The inhabitants of Laval were ordered, under pain of death, to report all strangers living with them, and domiciliary visits were commenced to insure that the order was obeyed. Mademoiselle des Mesliers had not the good fortune to escape this quest of victims. Relying on the safe-conduct, it is probable that she did not even try to conceal herself. She was arrested on the 26th December, and at once conducted to prison. Before the Revolutionary Committee she mentioned the circumstances of her rescue, and produced Marceau's certificate.

So far from availing her aught, this document and Angélique's deliverance almost proved fatal to her liberators. The Commissioners were suspicious of all the generals with the Army of the West, and Prieur and Turreau, glad of having surprised Marceau's secret, at once denounced him to the Committee for having shielded a young Vendéenne from the action of the law. Special proceedings were instituted against Marceau, Kléber, and Savary, which would have been fatal in their consequences had not Bourbotte, whose life Marceau had saved at Saumur, destroyed the papers. Both here, and afterwards at Nantes, Bourbotte showed his gratitude to Marceau by defending him against Turreau the representative, and the still more dangerous Turreau the general. Marceau, surrounded by enemies, was fortunate in having at least one in-

fluent friend among the representatives. Bourbotte met the generals after the battle of Savenay, and informed them of the risk they had incurred of having their lives forfeited. He did not add—for having perpetrated a humane act that the world will never fail to admire.

A few days after her arrest Mademoiselle des Mesliers wrote the following letter to her aunt from her prison-house, of which, however, and of her imminent danger, no mention is made. The unfortunate girl was either unconscious of the fate that awaited her, or wished to allay the anxiety of her relatives :

“You must already have learnt,” she writes, “that at Le Mans the Republican army gained a complete victory. I had the great misfortune to be separated from my family during the terrible confusion that followed our defeat. I desired death, but I have met with nothing but compassion in the midst of the Republican troops. I was saved by General Marceau, who treated me most humanely. I have also cause to be proud of his kindness and his generosity. He brought me to Laval, where, however, in spite of his precautions to shield me from all danger, I was arrested, and have been now three days under detention. . . . I can only ascribe my safety to my youth, which the kind general who protected me knew how to respect.”

On the morning of the 22nd January, 1794, Angélique des Mesliers appeared before the Revolutionary Committee of Mayenne, together with seven other Vendéans, of whom three were matrons and

four young girls, one of these being barely fifteen years of age.

The charge held to be established against them, on their own alleged confessions, was that they had constantly joined their lot with that of the brigands of La Vendée, had followed to all places devastated by them, and *were in consequence* the abettors and accomplices of all the murder and pillage committed by them ! The Committee accordingly proceeded to condemn them to suffer capital punishment, the sentence to be executed immediately, there being no appeal.

Sentence was pronounced at eight o'clock. At nine o'clock on the same morning this assassination under the forms of law was brought to its bloody close. The heads of eight unoffending women, young and old, fell under the blade of the guillotine in the Place au Blé, now named the Place du Palais.

"It was thus," says M. Parfait, "that Angélique des Mesliers perished on the scaffold on the cold grey morning of a winter's day, one of a group of martyrs."

Angélique is but the type of the thousands who perished at this period in the West of France, the victims of a war waged with ruthless ferocity by the so-called representatives of the people, the agents of that Revolutionary Tribunal established with a view to the summary punishment of all enemies of the Revolution. Her fate only transcends that of her sisters of La Vendée, because of the transient gleam of hope cast over it by the simple act of one

who waged not war with women, nor dyed his hands in innocent blood.

It is sad to think that Marceau and Savary, in taking Angélique out of Le Mans, were the unconscious cause of her death. No revolutionary tribunal was established at Le Mans. The Commune, to its eternal honour be it said, would not hear of it. Thus many, if not most, of the Vendean women, including perhaps Angélique's mother, who had remained behind in Le Mans, escaped death, though not in all cases imprisonment.

Marceau did not hear of the fate of Angélique until after he had left the Army of the West and was recruiting his health in the midst of friends near Rennes.

We have seen how, disgusted with the treatment he had received, and a victim to the base jealousy of Turreau, he had obtained leave of absence from the army. He did not, however, visit Chartres, as he had originally intended doing.

He had made the acquaintance, during his several visits to Rennes, of one of the wealthiest and noblest families of Brittany, the family of Leprêtre of Châteaugiron. At first he had simply been quartered on them, but was soon able to render them a service, which could not easily be forgotten, and which drew closer the bonds of a first friendship. The family consisted of the Count and Countess of Châteaugiron, two daughters, and a son, Hippolyte.

Hippolyte, who was not much older than Marceau, had been travelling abroad when the flames of revolution first broke out in Paris, to spread all

over France. Having returned on the first news of the event, he found himself, soon after his arrival at Rennes, watched and denounced as an *émigré*. It was in vain that the Count, now Citizen Leprêtre interceded on his son's behalf, and recalled his own services to France; Hippolyte was fast drifting towards the scaffold, and was only rescued from an untimely death through the intervention of Marceau.

The latter, on hearing of Hippolyte's danger, suggested to him, in the presence of the assembled family, that he should join the Republican army as his aide-de-camp.

"My friend," said Marceau, "would you be rescued from the wretches who pursue you, then come and be one of my aides-de-camp. I promise you, you will be well protected in that capacity."

The offer was at once accepted, and Marceau's intimacy with the family established.

On the conclusion of the campaign, Hippolyte obtained leave and returned to the château, where he informed his mother and sisters of Marceau's condition, and of his intention to visit Paris to consult a physician. The Countess at once despatched her son to Châteaubriant to beg of Marceau to be their guest, promising that he would be looked after like a second son, and his health restored by careful nursing.

Marceau hastened to accept the invitation. There was already in the family of Châteaugiron one whom he would be glad to see again. This was Agathe, the eldest daughter of the Count and Countess, a

beautiful and refined girl of seventeen or eighteen summers, a canoness of the Catholic Church, but imbued with the philosophy of Descartes, of whom her mother was a direct descendant.

Sergent, Marceau's brother-in-law, who often saw Agathe Leprêtre both before and after Marceau's death, has left the following description of her :

“Who could fail to feel the sweet influences of love at the sight of a young girl of seventeen years, tall, well-made, and with a complexion of a dazzling whiteness ; favoured moreover with a countenance at once frank and gentle and yet animated by two large blue eyes beaming with expression and proclaiming a soul full of tenderness? A fine head of hair of a light flaxen colour, always loosely and simply put up, heightened her great beauty. Her hand would have offered a model to the sculptor. . . . The soft intonation of her voice and a pleasant smile, across which one saw the beautiful row of pearly-white teeth, added still further to her wondrous charm. One easily sees in such a portrait a seductive woman, but, besides being this, she was a woman of strong will, and firm and constant in all her resolutions.”

First impressions are deepened during absence, and Marceau had not forgotten Agathe since the day he left Rennes to the day of his return to the château as a guest of her family and as a patient whose sufferings she had promised to assuage. This fact alone justifies our opinion that Marceau's feeling for Angélique des Mesliers had not deepened into love, and that the tender emotions which her

position gave rise to were neither revealed nor reciprocated by him.

Arrived at the Châteaugiron mansion, Marceau met Agathe daily, and their mutual love ripened and grew. But they were slow to make known their feelings to each other, and the refined modesty of Marceau would perhaps have kept his secret locked in his heart until he had left Rennes, had it not been that the Countess herself, Agathe's mother, broke the barrier between her daughter and the young general.

The Countess of Châteaugiron was a woman of considerable spirit and independence of character, and a descendant, as before mentioned, of the illustrious René Descartes. Though she had married a feudal noble who was a Royalist to the core, she had enough of that philosopher's teaching embedded in her expansive mind to welcome the Revolution, and to attach herself to the Republic, cost what it might to her class and family.

This sagacious woman was not slow in detecting and interpreting the relations, however unexpressed, that existed between Marceau and Agathe, and she proceeded to reveal the two young souls to one another. She admitted of no barrier between noble and bourgeois, and the union with the Republican general was altogether in accord with her wishes and her opinions. Besides, she was really attached to Marceau. On one occasion, being with her daughters by Marceau's bedside, she exclaimed : "*How proud should not the mother be who has brought into the world such a son !*" This was sufficient encouragement for

Mademoiselle Agathe to confide her sentiments to her mother, and she must have congratulated herself on the result, on learning that her mother approved of them and was her best friend and ally.

The betrothal was for the present kept a secret from the Count on the plea that he was pre-occupied repairing his ruined château of La Mothe. His prejudices it was hoped would be overcome when he was made to realize how deeply the family was indebted to General Marceau, and that in the book of true nobility every hero ranks as a noble. Thus it was that Marceau at last found the happiness that had been hitherto wanting in his life, and the emotions of love contributed, with the careful nursing by tender hands, both to improve his health and raise his spirits.

He had written to his sister Emira, informing her that he had postponed his departure for Chartres and was now at Rennes, where he was being well looked after, and he hoped she would come and see him there.

Emira and Sergent had already written congratulating Marceau on his victories at Le Mans and Savenay. In his letter to Emira, inviting her to visit him at Rennes, he replies to these felicitations as follows :

“What, my dear sister, do you congratulate me on these two battles, or rather these two massacres ! And do you really wish to have *a leaf from my laurels* ! Do you not know that they are stained and soiled with human blood, with the blood, moreover, of our fellow countrymen ? I shall not return to La



Vendée ; it is painful to me to have to fight against Frenchmen. I will remain in the West no longer. I wish to take up arms against a foreign foe ; in this only is honour and glory. I am asking for a post on the frontier, and I hope that my friends will assist me in obtaining it."

Emira accepted the invitation, and arrived post-haste at the château, where she was welcomed by all the members of the Leprêtre family. It was after her arrival, and during the revelation of Marceau's new-born love, that he heard of the death of Angélique des Mesliers.

One day, as Emira was seated at Marceau's bedside with the Countess and her two daughters, a courier arrived, who delivered to Marceau a small sealed packet.

"Who has sent this to me?" asked Marceau.

"General, I received it from the executioner of Nantes," was the reply, "whence I have come direct, with the order to deliver it to nobody but you, and to take back a receipt."

At the mention of the word executioner, Marceau recoiled with horror, and refused to accept the packet, saying: "I have nothing to do with any executioner."

The Countess, her daughters, and Emira, their curiosity aroused, pressed him to open the packet. They expected something strange and mysterious that quelled for the time their repugnance. But Marceau continued to hold out, until they represented to him that it may be some unfortunate who claimed his protection.

He submitted to their entreaties, and received the sinister packet from the courier, and unfastened it. Enclosed in many folds of paper was a plain gold watch. With the watch was a note, which explained as follows : “ In removing from prison to the place of execution a young Vendean girl (brought here for trial from Le Mans), she handed me this small watch, concealed up till then in her bosom, and said to me : ‘ Promise me, in the name of God, to have this sent to General Marceau, wherever he may be, the only proof I can give him of my gratitude.’ I promised I would do this, and I have fulfilled my duty.”

The letter was signed by the executioner of Laval, by whom it had been sent to the executioner of Nantes, who had now forwarded it to Marceau.

On learning the nature of the legacy, and the fate of Angélique des Mesliers, Marceau cried out, as if in the agony of his soul : “ Poor unhappy child, I promised her she should live !” The letter fell from his hands, the tears ran down his cheeks, and he remained speechless, seated upright in bed, as though gazing into the past, while Emira held one hand and Agathe the other.

This scene, which could only have enhanced the love of Agathe for one who displayed so much nobility of soul, took place at the end of January, 1794. It may be taken as the truest and most probable version of the story as to when and where Marceau first heard of Angélique’s fate. All other accounts are fictions of the imagination with no foundation in fact.

Marceau had not mentioned his engagement to his sister Emira. The discovery both surprised and hurt her, for her brother had never failed to consult her in all important matters connected with his troubled life. She saw at once that his pretended recovery to health was only the temporary rallying of a naturally strong constitution, due to the influence of new sensations, and that her brother was still dangerously ill. She determined therefore upon removing him to Paris in order to consult proper physicians, and if possible to efface the memory of the Royalist's daughter, union with whom was incongruous in the eyes of a Republican and the wife of a member of the National Convention.

But Marceau and Agathe, through the mediation of the Countess, continued to write to each other frequently, and neither time nor the non-realization of their vows was able to sever the connection between them. It was left, not to Emira, nor to Monsieur Leprêtre, but to the hand of death to accomplish this.

Towards the beginning of February, Marceau set out with his sister Emira for Chartres, where they intended to halt a few days before proceeding to Paris. "Marceau and his hosts," writes M. Parfait, "parted on the best of terms, each filled with hope. Kléber came to appoint a rendezvous on the northern frontiers, that is, with the Army of the Ardennes. The traveller Hippolyte gallantly promised to pay Emira an early visit in Paris. And Marceau, delighted and enchanted, carried away with him the love of the beautiful Agathe de Châteaugiron, the

canoness of Maubeuge, with her large eyes beaming with intelligence and virtue."

Marceau closes his so-called "Journal," with a reference to this leading event of his life. The conclusion is sad, but full of hope :

" I will not speak of the events that followed my meeting with Kléber again, except that they brought us to Rennes. Here, for the first time, I experienced the full power of love. I concealed it from everyone. I should not even have had the consolation of relying on any one, had not my secret been wrested from me. The passion that consumed me gave birth to others. The first and foremost of these was the passion for glory. It was my desire to become famous by fighting the enemies of my country and so to make myself worthier of her whom I loved. I knew her virtues, and I essayed to be virtuous too. I had nothing to offer her except a large heart, my honour, and a life unspotted from the world. I would have her clothed with the world's esteem. If I have not attained my objects, if, in spite of my efforts, I am still confounded with those who were only commanders in name, it is not for want of zeal or purpose. If I have not been able to shelter myself from calumny or to command the esteem of all, in this respect, too, grave injustice will in truth have been done to me. I await patiently the more fortunate time when I shall begin to be better known. Perhaps those who caused my unhappiness will have occasion to regret it. My manner of life holds out to me the promise of a better fate."

Such are the concluding words of Marceau's

memoir, or private journal, written when he was not twenty-five years of age, and of which almost the whole has now been quoted in the preceding pages. The confession was certainly not intended for the eyes of the world. It was written probably at the suggestion of the Countess of Châteaugiron after Marceau had left Rennes for Paris, and it was intended for the girl to whom he was now affianced, with a final view to its being perused by her Royalist father, as a justification of the career of the young Republican who presumed to ask for his daughter in marriage. "This manuscript," says Sergent, "which we now possess, was kept religiously guarded by Marceau's sweetheart, for whom he had written it. She and her mother alone knew of it."

As for the young girl for whom this confession was in the first instance made, she will ever be "clothed with esteem" by all who read the biography of Marceau and the story of the lifelong love he bore her. He has fulfilled at least a portion of the task he imposed on himself.



## PART III.

### THE SAMBRE-AND-MEUSE.

*“The army of the Sambre-and-Meuse was not one of the armies of the Republic and of the Empire whose successes were the most brilliant. But it was this army that initiated our long series of triumphs. In its ranks were trained the greater number of those warriors who carried our victorious standards into so many lands, and made glorious the name of France.”*—CLAUDE DESPREZ.





## CHAPTER I.

*Marceau on leave—Letters to friends—His reception in the Hall of the Convention—He joins the Army of the Ardennes—Capture of Thuin—On the Sambre and Meuse—Arrival of Jourdan—Battle of Fleurus.*

MARCEAU spent the remainder of his leave either in Paris or at a château in the neighbouring country. Under proper medical treatment, and the vigilant care of Emira, his health improved rapidly, and he was almost cured before he was convalescent.

During this period he lived in complete seclusion, avoiding whenever possible the visits of those who sought his society in the capital, and, above all, shunning politics and political personages.

He was unable to revisit Chartres before proceeding to the frontier, as he had earnestly wished to do, but he kept up a connection with his relatives there and with the companions of his youth, by the frequent exchange of letters with them.

On the 21st February he writes to Constantine Maugars from Paris, inquiring in affectionate terms after his friends of the Eure-et-Loir, for Constantine himself, for the silent Guillard, and for Madame Duchesnoy, with a kiss for pretty Modeste if she be

not unwilling ! These letters are continued throughout the ensuing campaigns, many being written on the battlefield of to-morrow or yesterday. They one and all show the affectionate regard of Marceau for his friends, and reveal a tender and gentle nature that looks for sympathy away from the scenes that form its own environment.

In the letter to Maugars above mentioned occurs the following characteristic passage : " I say nothing about the temper of the public. Here, as elsewhere, it is a whirlwind to be avoided, a ray of light you must not allow to beam on you. This is the maxim I follow, and I show myself nowhere. I shun both committees and public offices, and keep to myself. This I find to be the more profitable course."

" This *rôle* and this language," writes M. Maze, " recall Kléber and Hoche. Such an attitude well became the generals of the Republic during those troublous times. In the interests of France we must always regret that all the colleagues of these disinterested men were not marked by the same reserve."

It is recorded for us by Sergent that on one occasion at least Marceau did not succeed in avoiding the public gaze or " the applause of list'ning senates."

Soon after his arrival in Paris, and when he was well enough to walk, Marceau paid the usual official visit, required of all high officers in the army, to the great Committee of Public Safety, the executive of the National Convention.

He arrived early, dressed in the uniform of a full general, and awaited the members in the Hall of the Convention. The deputies dropped in gradually, the number of visitors increased, and soon Marceau found himself the subject of their conversation and scrutiny. All eyes were fixed on him. One member, incited thereto by the recent reverses on the frontier, stood up, and, pointing to Marceau, said : " Are you surprised that our soldiers are defeated in battle, and that the civil war is never-ending, when you see young men like that wearing the uniform of a general ! " To this a member of the Revolutionary Tribunal added : " You see now the manner of men to whom we confide the task of leading our children to slaughter, you know now why our defenders raise the cry of treason ! " These murmurs and ejaculations led to a tumult, and one member was about to bring the subject formally before the Convention, when Bourbotte entered the hall.

" What is it all about ? " he asked.

" That young officer," said the deputy, pointing to Marceau in scorn.

" What ! " said Bourbotte, turning round, and recognizing the young hero who had saved his life, " is it Marceau, my friend Marceau ! " And he ran up to him and folded him in his arms.

When the crowd of deputies and lookers-on heard the name, and knew it was the general who had brought to a successful close the sanguinary war of La Vendée, they made the hall resound with their cries of " Long live Marceau ! " " Long live the Republic ! " The tribunes and deputies descended

from their seats and surrounded Marceau, and overwhelmed him with their praises and greetings. Bourdon, deputy for the Oise, who with Bouchotte had appointed Marceau generalissimo, mounted the tribune and addressed the assembly in these words : “ Fellow-citizens and representatives of the people, *behold* the valiant soldier, the fearless young Marceau, one of the glories of the French name, the conqueror of Le Mans ! Let us greet him with our plaudits, and, in order to efface the recollection of the incident that has just taken place, let us say in the words of the poet :

‘ To those of heroic mould,  
Valour is neither young nor old.’ ”

Marceau, confused and troubled, was glad to be called away from this extempore *séance* to the audience with the Committee of Public Safety, where the congratulations were renewed, but not with the same embarrassing vehemence. Here he was informed that he must get well soon, as it was intended to send him to the north for service with the Army of the Ardennes.

The physicians had prescribed at least six weeks for Marceau’s restoration to health, and, thanks to his iron constitution, this period was not exceeded. On the 14th April, 1794, he was able to leave Paris to join the Army of the Ardennes.

We have seen that the campaign of 1793 ended in the conquest of the Netherlands south of Antwerp, and the advance of the French armies on to the Rhine. In the following year the Convention

ordered a levy of 300,000 men, but before the decree could operate Dumouriez had been defeated by the Allies in the Battle of Neerwinden, and by the end of March the entire French army compelled to retire once more behind their own frontiers. This was followed by the surrender of several fortresses on the Flemish frontier, and, on the eastern frontier, by the fall of Mayence, so heroically defended by Kléber and the veterans whom we have seen annihilated in the war of La Vendée. This was the culminating point of the success of the Allies. Henceforth, owing to the great French levies coming forward, and the dissensions among the Allies, the armies of the Republic resume the ascendancy, not to lose it again until the memorable campaign of 1799.

In the latter half of the year 1793 the siege of Dunkirk is raised, Jourdan gains the decisive action of Wattignies and relieves Maubeuge, and finally, before the year expires, both in Flanders and on the Rhine, the Allies have been once more compelled to evacuate French territory, and the French become the invaders. Great preparations had been made by the National Convention, and France now resembled a vast camp where each one laboured for the defence of the national independence. All that was best in France had gone to the front. Under the decrees, over a million men were raised, of whom at least 700,000 were available for the frontier. This force was wielded with great genius by a central committee presided over by Deputy Carnot, who was also a member of the Committee of Public

Safety, and was soon to become, in Napoleon's terse but expressive phraseology, "the organizer of victory."

The French forces protecting the frontier from Dunkirk to Bâle were divided into four armies, called respectively the Armies of the North, the Ardennes, the Moselle, and the Rhine. The Army of the Ardennes acted conjointly with that of the North, the two being under the supreme command of Pichegru, their operations extending from Dunkirk to Philippeville.

The Army of the Ardennes, to which Marceau had been posted, was now united in two divisions at Beaumont under Charbonnier, and formed, with three divisions of the Army of the North, under Desjardins, Pichegru's right wing. These five divisions faced the Allies on the Sambre and Meuse, and maintained touch with the Army of the Moselle on their right.

The corps so constituted consisted of fifty or sixty thousand men, badly equipped and ill disciplined. Charbonnier and Desjardins were commanders more zealous than capable, and possessing little or no authority, their operations being controlled by the ferocious St. Just and by Lebas, both deputies from Paris. At Beaumont, Marceau, as pre-arranged, found Kléber, who had likewise been transferred from La Vendée. These two, with Schérer, who commanded one of the divisions, were capable of leading Pichegru's right wing to victory, but their opinions were not attended to, while the plans of the supreme generals were subordinated to the am-

bition and the bloodthirsty zeal of the representatives of the people above named.

Both Kléber and Marceau, after their successes in La Vendée, deserved to be placed in more independent commands, or at least under more important generals. Marceau was placed at the head of one of the two advance-guards, and in this capacity he carried out all that depended on him to sustain the honour of the Republic and its Army of the Ardennes.

The Allies—that is, the left wing of the army of Prince Coburg—were established in front of Mons, and guarded both banks of the Sambre, their main body occupying an intrenched camp on the left bank between Rouvroi and Grandreng. The movement now prescribed by Pichegru to his right wing was to pass the Sambre and march upon Mons, at the same time to secure the Meuse between Namur and Liege, and thus cut off the enemy in the event of their retreat in that direction.

The Sambre flows between well-wooded banks and elevated plateaus cut up by ravines and water-channels, and offers great difficulties to an attacking force. The first attempt of the passage of this river was made on the 10th May. The Republicans advanced in seven columns. The two advance-guards, that of Marceau and Duhesme, both under the orders of the former, were directed against the intrenched post of Thuin, one division of the centre to support the movement.

Marceau commenced the attack at 3 a.m. The enemy occupied the woods in front of the town,

where they offered a short but stubborn resistance. Expelled by Marceau's chasseurs, they shut themselves up in the formidable redoubts encircling the town. Marceau now took possession of the heights on the right bank of the Bimele, at the junction of which with the Sambre the town of Thuin is situated. As the fire of his light guns produced but little effect, and without waiting for the supporting division, he resolved to carry the intrenchments and redoubts, as soon as the first breach was made, by what he called in his report *French revolutionary methods*, that is, at the point of the bayonet. Hardy, one of his La Vendée comrades, moved forward with the chasseurs and artillery, and drove the Austrians, unaccustomed to such tactics, from the ramparts. There remained but the ancient château, from which bullets were showered down on the French troops until a handful of sappers scaled the walls from the rear, and made prisoners of the defenders. Thuin occupied, Duhesme drove the enemy across the Sambre, and, crossing the river near the abbey, occupied Lobbes after a sharp action with the retreating foe.

The capture of Thuin, effected without the co-operation of the supporting division, was a brilliant achievement, and Marceau had the honour to be the first, since the fall of Landrecies, to rally victory to the Republican standards. The delegates with the army did not fail to recognize, in their reports, the brilliance as well as the importance of the victory.

Marceau took up his headquarters near the farm



of Beaudrebut, where the enemy still maintained itself on the banks of the Sambre. He was not allowed to remain here long. It was necessary, during the move on Mons, for Desjardins to cover his right wing in the direction of Charleroi. This task was entrusted to Marceau, who on the following day passed the Sambre by the bridge near the abbey of Alnes, and occupied the heights of Lernes. He was not seriously engaged with the enemy on this day, for the attack of the Austrians was directed against the centre, where it was repulsed.

The advance was continued on the 12th May, Marceau carried Fontaine-l'Evêque after several hours of severe fighting, and, the other divisions following his example, both banks of the Sambre, from Maubeuge to Marchiennes, passed into the possession of the French. But the Austrians were at this juncture strongly reinforced, and defeated, with heavy loss, the left wing of the French army at Grandreng, in its attempt to approach Mons. Marceau, who was ordered to make a demonstration towards Charleroi, maintained his position after some skirmishes, but was obliged to retire when the left wing was driven back over the Sambre. He effected his retreat with precision, covering that of the divisions forming the right wing. In their retreat the French army set fire to the abbey of Lernes and to the town of Thuin, but for this act of inhumanity neither Marceau nor his troops were responsible.

St. Just, impatient under defeat, resolved to attempt a second passage of the river. The generals

disapproved of the operation, but were obliged to obey this terrible pro-consul. The several columns moved forward once more, and in the same order, and for two entire days the advance-guards of the opposing armies engaged each other all along the line. The French maintained their position on the right and in the centre ; at Erquelinnes on the left, however, they suffered a severe defeat, and their army remained exposed and in a perilous plight, with its back to the Sambre.

On the 24th May Marceau and Kléber were ordered to advance towards Frasnès, to make a grand foray in that rich district. They advanced to Anderlues, taking 15,000 men with them. The Austrian general, Kaunitz, on being informed of this weakening of the French line, attacked it forthwith, and inflicted a heavy loss on its left wing at Peissant. But for the courage and skill displayed by Kléber and Marceau, who covered the retreat of the centre and right respectively, the French army would have been annihilated on this day. As it was, the Republicans were once more driven across the Sambre with a loss of 4,000 men. In spite of his victory, Kaunitz was replaced by the Prince of Orange in the command of the Imperial forces on the Sambre and Meuse.

After this defeat St. Just called a council of war at Thuin. Kléber and Marceau were present, and pointed out the disorganized state of the army. The other officers present reported that their troops were starving, ill-clad, and bare-footed. One and all advised a rest till Jourdan should come up with

40,000 men. St. Just had, however, made up his mind, and replied to these representations: "There must be a victory for the Republic to-morrow; choose between a siege and a battle!" And so a third attempt of the passage was resolved on.

Previous to the advance a new distribution of troops was made, and a new plan of attack prescribed. Convinced that in all the previous actions success had almost always depended on the issue of the first attack, St. Just, Charbonnier, and Desjardins formed a new advance-guard division for both armies. This consisted of nine select battalions of infantry and four regiments of light cavalry. The command of this division was entrusted to Marceau, who had Duhesme and D'Hautpoult under his orders as brigadiers.

The plan of attack adopted was that Marceau's division, supported by Veza's, should attack the camp of La Tombe above Marchiennes-aux-Ponts, while Mayer's division turned the road from Philippeville to Charleroi, and Fromentin forced the passage of the river on the left.

Marceau's grenadiers, without food for forty-eight hours, and wearied out with a double march, refused to pass the wood in front of the position. The menaces of St. Just and the entreaties of Duhesme were all in vain; but the soldiers responded at once to the stirring appeals of Marceau and Kléber, who now arrived on the scene. The divisions of Marceau and Veza advanced and formed beyond the plains. They were

received here by a murderous fire, and taken in reverse by the enemy's batteries. But Marceau held on tenaciously, and before night-fall the enemy was compelled to evacuate the camp, leaving only enough troops to defend Marchiennes.

On the 29th May, the day fixed for the passage of the Sambre, having occupied the camp of La Tombe, Marceau carried Marchiennes and forced the crossing of the river, and took up a position behind Fontaine-l'Évêque, while Fromentin occupied Gosselies. Veza and Mayer, after a first defeat, also succeeded in crossing the river, and encamped opposite Fleurus, their right resting on the Sambre at Châtelet. This completed the investment of Charleroi, the actual siege of which was entrusted to Mayer, the other divisions forming an *enceinte* round him. Marceau's division covered the ground from Marchiennes to Fontaine-l'Évêque and Courcelles.

The position of the French army was anything but a safe one. It was altogether too extended, stretching as it did from Maubeuge to Lambusart. The Prince of Orange, who had again been reinforced, was not slow to detect this, and resolved on a general attack, with 28,000 men, on the line between Fontaine-l'Évêque and Lambusart, while with 7,000 more he broke through it at Erquelinnes.

The attack was delivered on the 3rd June. On the day previous an attempt had been made on Marceau's division, but it had been successfully met by his infantry, while his cavalry had shattered several regiments of the Emperor's hussars.

On the day of the main attack, Marceau maintained his ground against all the efforts of Latour, who had been directed against him. He even prepared to take the offensive, so as to draw off the enemy from the left wing of the army, but a column, 8,000 strong, tried to turn his left, and he was obliged to withdraw his cavalry and maintain himself as best he could on the heights of Leernes and at Fontaine.

"I can speak in terms of the highest praise," wrote Marceau, in his report of the day's fighting, "of the conduct of the officers and soldiers. Never was order better maintained both during the manœuvres and on the march. Neither bullets nor shells, nor the marked superiority in numbers of the enemy, were able to compel a single man to quit the ranks."

The French, meanwhile, had been compelled to raise the siege of Charleroi, and Fromentin, driven back to the Sambre from Gosselies, exposed the whole of Marceau's right flank. Alive to the danger, the latter masked his retreat in front of the wood of Monceaux, and gave time to his division to retire by Alnes and Lendely. He had nearly effected his retreat when he received orders to maintain his ground on the left bank of the river at any cost. He returned to the task without hesitation, and retook Leernes. The enemy now tried to turn his flanks, but he defeated all their efforts, and taking advantage of their disorder, his task being accomplished, once more made good his retreat.

The troops retired in the best order. "All the

soldiers," says Marceau, in his report, "have displayed great courage. Not a single complaint was heard, although the fight lasted from four o'clock in the morning till eight at night."

The other divisions had repassed the Sambre at Marchiennes and towards the woods of Monceaux, where, fortunately, a bridge had been constructed. Thus ended the third attempt to secure the Sambre. The French lost 2,000 men on this day, but they had been more successful, and their failure was due to the large and timely reinforcements received by the Austrians, as well as to their own too extended position. But heavier blows, more decisive in their results, were now to be dealt by the army of the Republic on the Sambre and Meuse.

We have seen that Carnot, at the head of a committee, controlled the armies of the Republic on all the menaced frontiers. Recognizing the futility of opposing the invasion equally along the entire line, he resolved to pierce it by concentrating an overwhelming mass of troops against one or more points only.

For this purpose the Sambre, between Maubeuge and Namur was selected, and Jourdan, in command of the Army of the Moselle, was directed to transfer himself with 40,000 men to Charleroi, leaving only a screen before the Prussian camps at Luxembourg. "This step," says Jomini, "was one of the cleverest and most fortunate of the early campaigns, and decided the fate of the Netherlands."

Jourdan arrived before Charleroi with his advance-guard on the 3rd June, in time to see the

troops of the Republic streaming back over the Sambre, defeated in their third attempt on the river and their first against the fortress. On the day following, the bulk of his army arrived in the neighbourhood of Charleroi.

The divisions of the Moselle, and the corps under Charbonnier and Desjardins were formed into a single army, to be called henceforth, and to be known to fame as the *Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse*. This army consisted of 91,000 men, of whom about 10,000 were detached under Schérer, to guard the Sambre between Thuin and Maubeuge. The remainder were to lay siege to Charleroi, to act on the real line of operations and penetrate the enemy's line, and to put an end to the fluctuations of victory.

It is not to be supposed that this heterogeneous mass of men came into action at once. It was essential first to amalgamate and organize the different elements of which it was composed, to secure the hitherto neglected supplies, and to bring up the material necessary for the siege of Charleroi, an operation in which the new army was to make its first trial of strength. In all these undertakings Marceau's Vendean experience stood him in good stead, and Jourdan had frequently to acknowledge, in his orders of the day, the assistance he received both from him and from Kléber.

There was, moreover, a redistribution of commands at this time, and Marceau was placed at the head of the two divisions of which the late Army of the Ardennes had been composed.

Jourdan resolved when all was ready to recross the river, and at once invest Charleroi. This town is strongly seated on the left bank of the Sambre. Beyond it is a series of positions forming a semi-circle, the extremities of which rest on the river. These positions, under the conditions of the warfare of those days, were scarcely advantageous, forming, as they did, too extensive an arc, and needing a larger force than Jourdan had at his disposal for their adequate defence.

While Hatry's siege corps invested Charleroi on both banks, the bulk of the French army occupied these positions, being so disposed as to cover the operations of the siege in all directions.

On the 12th June Jourdan successfully crossed the river. The Austrians had left only a cordon of four battalions and some cavalry to defend it, while the greater portion of their forces was concentrated at Rouvroi. The French army occupied the same position as it did on the 2nd and 3rd June, but its line was more extended. Marceau's divisions formed the right wing, and were deployed in advance of the wood of Campinaire; they connected the French line with the Sambre, and occupied the bridge of Tamines in rear, and the posts of Baulet, Wausersée, and Valaine in front. The French centre lay about Lambusart, Fleurus, Wagné, and Gosselies, while the left wing under Kléber continued the line along the stream of the Piéton back to the Sambre.

Jourdan, aware of the weakness of his position, resolved to attack at once. On the 16th June he ordered his two wings to advance, while he himself



moved against Orange with a compact force in the centre. But the Allies forestalled him, and met his troops close to their encampments. Orange delivered his attack in five columns, of which four were sent against the French centre and right alone.

Jourdan was received by a tremendous cannonade, which forced him to retreat to his first position. Marceau's advance-guard was driven in, and Valaine occupied. By 11 o'clock the fight raged all along the line with varying fortune. The dispositions of Kléber on the left, and of Jourdan in the centre, together with Marceau's tenacity in defending the wood of Campinaire, prevented the Allies from taking advantage of their first successes. Indeed, victory was on the point of declaring itself for the French, when Beaulieu, who commanded the Austrian left, directed an overwhelming force against Lambusart and Campinaire, under protection of a heavy artillery fire. The troops of Lefebvre and Championnet were driven back, and re-passed the river in great disorder, while Hatry raised the siege and followed their example. Jourdan now ordered a general retreat, which was carried out in good order, Kléber on the left and Marceau on the right covering the entire army and preventing the enemy's pursuit.

The Allies on this day lost 2,200 men, the French 3,000, but the latter had terminated the action with more honour than on previous occasions, their defeat being due to the radical defects of their position and to the failure of their ammunition.

Jourdan, with his usual tenacity of purpose, had

no sooner been driven back, than he made preparations for renewing the attack. Drawing on Maubeuge for more artillery, in which arm the enemy had shown itself very much superior to him, he recrossed the Sambre for the fifth time, and Charleroi was invested for the third time.

Coburg, who had long hesitated, now came to the succour of his left wing, and joined it at Nivelles on the 22nd June, but, by a fatality which marked all his acts, hesitated to attack the French until the 26th.

In the interval, Jourdan, convinced that the issue of the campaign depended on the immediate fall of Charleroi, spared no efforts to reduce it. The works were pushed forward with prodigious celerity and success. On the 25th June the enemy's batteries had been silenced, and all preparations made for an assault, when the Austrian general, intimidated by the threats of St. Just to put the entire garrison to the sword, surrendered at discretion. His troops marched out of Charleroi the next day with the full honours of war.

It was in the midst of these interminable conflicts that Marceau received a piece of news which affected him deeply. Emira wrote from Paris to say that Hippolyte Leprêtre, his aide-de-camp and friend, and the brother of his affianced wife, had been arrested on his way to the Sambre, and was now imprisoned at Luxembourg. He had been arrested under the Law of Suspects, by which anyone who, for the most trivial reason, could be suspected of disliking the new political *régime*, could be thrown

into prison, and once there, as Marceau knew full well, he rarely escaped the scaffold.

Marceau at once wrote to the Committee of General Security in Paris, demanding the liberation of his aide-de-camp. Emira also promised, through Conventionnel Sergent, to do all she could for the young man's immediate release. But Marceau was impatient, and asked for leave, which it was not probable would be granted when a great battle, the battle of Fleurus, was impending. No replies were received by him from Paris in answer to his numerous letters, and it was many days before he could hear of the fate of his friend, whom he had already rescued once from the agents of the Terror.

On the 26th June, Coburg, ignorant of the fall of Charleroi, attacked the French intrenched camps around it with a force of 70,000 men. Jourdan's army occupied the same position as on the 16th June, except that both flanks had been drawn in and the troops had had time to throw up breast-works and redoubts along their front.

The two divisions of the Army of the Ardennes, 16,500 strong, under the command of Marceau, formed as before the right wing of the French army. Marceau's right rested on the Sambre, his centre lined the wood of Copiaux, while on the left he occupied Lambusart and connected with Lefebvre at Campinaire. His advance-guard was posted at Baulet, Wausersée, and Valaine, in front of the above positions.

The centre of the Republican army consisted of three divisions, 26,500 strong, of which the division

of Lefebvre was posted on the right adjoining Marceau. These three divisions extended in a semi-circle from Campinaire to Thumeon, along which they occupied several redoubts and earthworks as well as the towns of Wagné, Fleurus, Heppignies, and Gosselies. Kléber, with 10,000 men, and Montaigu with 8,500, formed the left wing ; the former, with his main body, was posted on the plateau of Jumet, while the latter guarded the Piéton and completed the line to the Sambre.

Hatry's division, 11,000 strong, with 2,700 cavalry under Dubois, was posted at Ronsart behind the centre, while 6,000 men were held in reserve at Fontaine-l'Évêque, behind the left wing. It will thus be seen that the right wing, under Marceau, had no reserve except what it could draw on from the centre.

Coburg divided his corps into three columns, of which three divisions, 16,000 or 18,000 strong, under Beaulieu, were told off to force the right wing by both banks of the Sambre and at Lambusart, and then converge to attack the fortress of Charleroi itself.

The action commenced at daybreak on the 26th June. Each of Coburg's corps delivered battle separately, and only united late in the day. We are only concerned here with the attack on the right wing. On the left and centre the Republicans met with varied success, and it is doubtful whether the centre would not have been turned and overwhelmed, owing to the retreat of Montaigu, had not Coburg, on hearing of the fall of Charleroi, with-

drawn his columns from those points and ordered their retreat to Brussels.

The attack on the right of the French position was delivered with consummate ability by the Austrian general, Beaulieu, who at the outset drove in Marceau's advance-guard, and occupied the *cense* of De Fays, Wausersée, and Valaine with its wood. Marceau's troops now extended themselves along the wood of Copiaux, and stubbornly defended the intrenchments they had made there. After being held in check during several hours, Beaulieu at length occupied the outlets and cross-roads to the Maison Rouge on the French right, thus turning the line of fieldworks, and compelling Marceau to abandon his position.

The retreat was precipitated by charges of cavalry, in which arm Marceau was far inferior to his adversary. The infantry, however, still held ground, until at a critical moment the supply of ammunition failed. A panic spread through the ranks, the alarm was sounded, some soldiers cried out, "*Sauve qui peut !*" and soon the retreat was turned into ignominious flight. In vain did their general throw himself at the head of his troops and endeavour to restore order and reanimate their courage ; nothing could stop them, and they fled back to the Sambre, which they crossed at Pont-à-Loup in horrible confusion.

Without troubling himself about the rest of his soldiers, Marceau, at the head of some battalions who had remained firm, threw himself behind the hedges and in the gardens of Lambusart, which he

defended with desperation, exposing himself everywhere as though he sought death.

But Beaulieu, being reinforced, now launched ten squadrons of cavalry against Lambusart. Twice Marceau repulsed them at the point of the bayonet, but he was at length obliged to fall back from the village, and take up a new position between it and the adjoining wood. Lefebvre, on hearing of Marceau's plight, sent Soult to his aid with two battalions of infantry and some cavalry; at the same time he massed twelve guns against Lambusart, now occupied by the enemy.

Beaulieu, on attempting to deploy from the village, was stopped by a vigorous fire from Marceau. Masking the village, he then deployed in its rear, and advanced to the attack from its northern side, but here the twelve guns placed by Lefebvre mowed down his battalions with grape-shot. The Austrians, nothing discouraged, returned three times to the charge, only to be repulsed each time with tremendous loss.

The village of Lambusart, still held by Beaulieu, had now become the focus of the attack and defence; Beaulieu concentrated his three columns upon it, and the Austrian centre moved to his support. Jourdan was not slow in detecting this movement, and detached a brigade of Hatry's division of the reserve to the aid of Lefebvre and Marceau.

Meanwhile the battle raged around the village. Lambusart was in flames. The artillery fire was so brisk on both sides that the opposing forces could not see each other for the smoke. The shells lighted

the ripening corn and the wooden huts of the French camp, throwing a lurid glare over the scene, and enveloping in smoke and ashes the soldiers of Marceau and Soult, who struggled amidst it.

On the approach of Hatry, Lefebvre and Marceau assumed the offensive. The Imperialists, though surprised by this double attack, offered a stubborn resistance, and only abandoned Lambusart and its vicinity after they had strewn the ground with their corpses.

It was now 6 o'clock, and Beaulieu was preparing to renew the struggle, when the order reached him to retire to the Sambre and to Gembloux. He abandoned the contest and withdrew his troops, who left the battlefield in perfect order, preventing any effectual pursuit by Marceau or Lefebvre.

Coburg and his army retreated in the direction of Nivelles, Jourdan, for want of ammunition, being unable to pursue them.

Such was the battle of Fleurus, as it is called. At most it was a drawn battle, in which the French remained masters of the field. The losses on each side were about equal, some five or six thousand men being *hors de combat*. But the results of the battle were far-reaching. By this victory Carnot's plan had been consummated. The line of the Allies had been pierced, Belgium lay open to the French, and the war was transferred from the frontiers of France to the Rhine and to the territory of the Allies.

## CHAPTER II.

*Marceau's explanation—Jourdan and Marceau—Battle of the Ourthe—An "Order of the Day."*

IT was but natural that Jourdan and the representatives should expect from Marceau an explanation of the misconduct of his troops on the field of Fleurus, and the latter was not slow in giving it. The reports are characteristic of the writer.

The day after the battle he wrote to Jourdan from Lambusart: "I owe you an account of what happened yesterday on the right. I will relate the events as briefly and as clearly as I can." After mentioning the successful attack on his outposts at Auveloïs, he continues thus: "I need not speak of the different manœuvres I found necessary to oppose an enemy double our strength in infantry and cavalry, and with three times our artillery. It will suffice for you to know that the right of the line of the Ardennes division, that is, the hill of Boulet and the redoubts covering Lambusart, were defended for eight hours with an obstinacy equal to that of the assailants, and it was only after its artillery had been dismounted and rendered useless that this division yielded to superior force. The retreat became disorderly because the enemy by a charge



of more than 3,000 cavalry made an opening in the line which it became impossible to defend."

He leaves it to Lefebvre to report what occurred after the division of the Ardennes had been defeated. In spite of the desertion of his troops he is still able to say a word in their defence: "I need not speak of the numerous brave deeds that have been done to-day, nor of the cowardly acts that have disgraced it. Those who have made it illustrious by the former will find their reward in the satisfaction that they have performed a duty much needed of them. As for the others, I like to think they will seize the first opportunity to make amends for what they have done, and will once more prove themselves worthy of the cause they defend."

He proceeds, in conclusion, to assign by suggestion the morning's defeat to its true cause: "It will be necessary to reinforce the right of the line. The enemy has already twice attacked it in force, and on each occasion our divisions have had to bear unsupported the weight of superior numbers brought to bear on this point."

The despatch was followed by a letter to the representatives, which for its fearless and straightforward assertion deserves to be cited in its entirety: "I have forwarded to you, at the same time as to the general in command, a report of the affair of the 8th, and of all that concerns the divisions of the right under my orders. In this matter, as in all others, I have not deviated from the truth, the sole guide of my expressions. You will therefore find no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that it

was neither my fault nor that of the troops I had the honour to command, that is, of the division of the Ardennes, which unaided sustained the efforts of the enemy from 3 a.m. to 11 a.m., but was unable to secure the victory for itself in the end.

Candid and loyal, and incapable of dissimulation, I have told you that many have distinguished themselves, even as many have not behaved as I should have wished them to do. But inexperience is the cause of many evils, and in this instance, as in many others, it has perhaps prevented some of the troops from doing what was expected of them. I have not even concealed from you my hope and belief, that the success of the day will obliterate the memory of those particular faults, which those who commit them must make amends for when they fight once more the enemies of our country."

It has been said that in this first campaign Marceau was not as successful as either his talents or his valour deserved, and that at Fleurus he was particularly unfortunate in the wholesale desertion of his troops. But we have seen that up to the day of the great battle he had no complaint to make against Fortune, for he had been uniformly successful in the conduct of the part assigned to him in the general plan of the campaign. As for Fleurus, it will be conceded that not only did Marceau do all that was possible under the circumstances, but that his efforts alone prevented the complete defeat of his corps, and the consequent turning of the right flank by the enemy, whose object it was to penetrate to Charleroi.

Not only did Jourdan and the representatives accept Marceau's explanation, but they extolled him in their despatches for the valour he had displayed and the consummate ability he had given proof of when face to face with a superior foe. Kléber had once said that Marceau had few equals in the dexterity with which he could modify or completely change a plan of attack in the very heat and height of a struggle. His abandonment of his panic-stricken troops to Mayer and to their own devices, and his assumption of a new and more concentrated defence around Lambusart confirm Kléber's opinion and led Jourdan to adopt it in his report.

In the operations subsequent to the victory of Fleurus Marceau continued to render important services. In the advance on Mons he defeated Beaulieu's advance-guard at Gembloux. Later on, at Onoz, he repulsed a sudden attack and maintained his ground during sixteen hours against strong combinations of the enemy. But, though he held his own, Beaulieu's position was too strong to be forced. Encamped towards Gembloux and Sombreffe, the latter successfully defended the roads leading to Namur, and defeated all the efforts of the French to turn the line of the Allies in that direction. It was only on the 6th and 7th July that Beaulieu fell back on Gembloux after a severe struggle and yielded Sombreffe to the Republicans.

At Onoz, Marceau had a fall from his horse and was obliged to retire to Givet for a week. "This violent contusion of the thigh," he writes to Jourdan,

“ will take time to heal, but be sure I shall return as soon as possible to the post of honour whither my country calls me.”

Pichegru and Jourdan's troops had meanwhile entered Brussels, and on the 11th July the two armies were united in one long line, their left at Vilvorde and the right towards Namur. The Allies fell back on the Meuse.

Marceau returned to his command on the 16th July and his first act was to force the passages of the Meuse at Namur and Huy, and to carry the enemy's intrenched camps on both banks of that river at the point of the bayonet. The enemy attacked his outposts at Strée, but he led a cavalry charge against them, utterly routed their cavalry, and took the Austrian commander prisoner with his own hand.

At this stage of the campaign Jourdan received orders to stay his march until such time as the four French fortresses in his rear still held by the Allies should be reduced. The opposing armies therefore remained inactive in view of each other during the next six weeks. The Austrians under Clerfayt, who had succeeded Coburg, guarded the Meuse from Roermond to Maastricht, with their left they occupied the *Chartreuse* heights behind Liege and those of Sprimont behind the Ourthe and the Aywaille. The Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse occupied a position facing this line, the divisions of Marceau and Mayer (both under Marceau) being posted on the extreme right at Strée and Huy in advance of Namur.

It was intended at the beginning of September to send Marceau and his corps to reinforce the Army of the Moselle, whose operations had been tardy and unprofitable. Marceau objected strenuously to leaving his friend Kléber and the Grand Army with which his name was now so honourably associated. He prevailed on Representative Gillet to interfere, and the obnoxious order was cancelled.

There was now another friend whom Marceau was unwilling to part from, one who, ere long, occupied a higher place in his esteem than even Kléber. This was Jourdan, his commander-in-chief, with whom Marceau was already on most intimate terms. He had learnt to admire Jourdan's audacious genius, and a closer acquaintance had ripened into deep mutual regard. Jourdan had early formed a correct estimate of his friend's military talents, and used all his efforts to retain him in his command. We shall find that he entrusted to Marceau those great and arduous undertakings where, though his impetuosity would be held in restraint by the very nature of the command, there would be full scope for his skill in occupying and his tenacity in holding a position and for his unwearied activity in the presence of an enemy.

Amid the cares of an arduous campaign Marceau did not forget his friends in France. He wrote to them frequently, while they, as he complains, in the enjoyment of their ease and leisure, failed to reply to his letters as often as he would have wished. His friend Maugars, now his aide-de-camp, was on leave at Chartres. On the 8th September Marceau

writes to him from camp : " Heavy blows will have to be dealt before the present campaign comes to an end. You would doubtless not be averse to playing a part in it with the best of your friends. . . . The army that laid siege to Valenciennes is expected here every moment. On its arrival we shall attempt something. May fortune, which has so far favoured me, enable me to announce our complete success. I shall have to regret your not taking any part in it, at the same time I shall have been free of all anxiety on your account."

The reference here is to Schérer, who, after reducing Valenciennes and Condé, rejoined the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse with twenty-four battalions and ten squadrons, raising Jourdan's effective strength to 116,000 men. This army was now in excellent condition, having benefited both in health and discipline during the not unwelcome inactivity within intrenched camps. The administrative service alone languished, and, as we shall see, continued to deteriorate until, at length, its incapacity and neglect brought about the ruin and defeat of this magnificent force, through cold, exposure, and starvation.

The four fortresses having fallen, Jourdan was free to continue his advance on the Roer and the Rhine. In numbers he was superior to his opponent Clerfayt, whose army did not exceed 84,000 men. Of this force 28,000 made up the left wing, placed under Latour, and extended from Liege to Sprimont. The heights of Sprimont behind the Ourthe and Aywaille, the extreme left

of the Austrian position, were defended by 22,000 men, the remaining 6,000 lined the Ourthe from Esneux to Liege. It was here that Jourdan determined to strike a decisive blow and so force the strong line of defence.

The right wing of the Republican army had been placed under Schérer. It consisted of the divisions of Marceau, Mayer, and Hacquin, and the brigade of Bonnet. On the 13th September these forced the passage of the Ourthe at Comblain-au-Pont and Durbuy, and were now established on the left bank of this river and its tributary, the Aywaille or Amblève.

On the 17th Kléber made a strong demonstration against the right and centre of the Imperialist position, which Clerfayt thereupon reinforced. This was what Jourdan wanted, for it drew away the reserves of the enemy, while Schérer, with 30,000 men, attacked the left.

The Aywaille, before it joins the Ourthe, meanders for a distance of two or three miles along a deep bed between steep abrupt banks. Beyond this portion of the river rises a well-wooded ridge, which crowns the vast plateau of Sprimont. Plateau and ridge can only be gained by the defiles of Halleux, Aywaille, and Sougnies, now defended by twelve battalions of infantry and a formidable artillery. Behind Sprimont and its plateau lay Latour's reserve of ten more battalions and 3,000 cavalry, while a strong brigade watched the passage of the Ourthe at Esneux. This was the position Schérer was ordered to carry.

He divided his corps into three columns. Marceau commanded the first division, which was directed against the heights of Halleux and the right and centre of the plateau of Sprimont. On Marceau's right, and further up the Aywaille, was Mayer, who, acting under Marceau's orders, was told off to carry the village of Aywaille and then penetrate the Austrian centre. Beyond Mayer, and opposite to the village of Sougnies, was Hacquin's division, destined to fall on the left flank of the enemy. Bonnet was to force the passage of the Ourthe at Esneux, and create a diversion in rear of the Sprimont heights.

The battle commenced at the break of day. Latour's advance-guards were overpowered before the villages of Rouvrai and Aywaille by Marceau, and driven across the river at the point of the bayonet. Marceau now plunged into the rapid waters of the Aywaille at the head of his troops, gained the opposite bank under a heavy fire, and was soon master of the defiles of Halleux-le-Grand, while Mayer occupied the corresponding gorges in his front.

On the extreme right, Hacquin had not been so fortunate. He had advanced too soon. After fording the river and carrying the foremost heights, he was assailed by overwhelming numbers of the enemy. His troops were driven out of the defiles and almost hurled into the Aywaille. But he reforded the river and returned to the attack, and, surmounting the heights, bore down on the left wing of the Austrians at the charge, carrying all before him.

Latour, fully occupied on the left, paid little heed



to Marceau and Mayer, who, on emerging from the defiles, had formed their divisions into one massive line of battalions, previous to storming the heights. Marceau directed his cavalry against the right flank of the enemy while he assailed the position in front with the infantry of both divisions. His troops advanced with bayonets fixed and singing the *Marseillaise*, now for the first time used as a battle-chant. Marceau was the first to crown the heights at the head of his columns. Here a deadly fire of shot and shell met the French, and for some time the issue seemed doubtful. Mayer had come up on the right, but for three hours the fire never slackened, during which, though neither division lost ground, the Republican ranks were mown down and raked from end to end. But Hacquin's column had now gained the woods of Sougnies, and threatened the left flank of the Imperialists on the heights of Louveigné, at the same time that Bonnet, after crossing the Ourthe, repulsed the Austrians at Esneux and Hoteigné and disturbed Latour's reserves in his rear.

Latour, assailed in front, menaced on both flanks, his road to Cologne threatened, and abandoned by his numerous cavalry, which had refused to face Marceau's squadrons, beat a retreat to the heights of the Vesdre. Thus, by a skilful manœuvre, Schérer had cut off Latour from the centre, and had Jourdan been able to support him from Liege, the entire left wing of the Imperialists must have surrendered. Marceau's division had borne the entire brunt of the first attack on the plateau, and had

contributed materially to this brilliant success. His division alone took on this day 15 guns, 40 caissons, over 100 horses, and 500 prisoners.

The attack was well conceived and executed, and was equally honourable to Jourdan and to the generals engaged in it. The Austrians lost, altogether, 1,500 men killed and wounded, 36 cannon, and 2,000 prisoners. Kléber envied his colleagues this day and paid homage to the victors in an eloquent *order of the day* which he issued to his division.

These were not the only fruits of the victory. During the same night the Imperial army quitted all its positions on the Meuse and Ourthe, and retired in haste in several columns towards Rolduc and Aix-la-Chapelle.

The pursuit was taken up the next day along the entire line. Schérer's advance-guard, after several skirmishes, gained the heights of Clermont on the 20th, and Schérer and Marceau soon after entered Limbourg and Aix-la-Chapelle. The further advance towards the Rhine was barred by the Austrians, who were found strongly posted behind the Roer, the passage of which they were prepared to dispute. They occupied the right bank of that river from Niederau and Kreutzau to Roermond. The left, under Latour, was concentrated around Düren; the centre, though advanced beyond the left bank so as to utilize the plateau of Aldenhoven, was protected by the fortified town or *place* of Jülich on the right bank; the right, under Werneck, completed the line as far as Roermond.

The front of the Austrian position was covered by

the Roer, a small but rapid river, fordable only at a few points. It flows between well-wooded heights and steep banks of which the right almost invariably commands the left. The Austrian advance-guards, posted on the right bank, defended all the approaches with a numerous artillery.

Jourdan lost no time in making his dispositions for a decisive attack. Leaving only 15,000 men before Maastricht, he took the remainder of Kléber's corps to form his left wing. His right wing, still under Schérer, was already established at Eschweiler, opposite Düren and Mirweiler, and his centre at St. Georges and Kellenberg facing Altorp, Aldenhoven, and Linnich.

On the 19th September, we find Marceau at Blendeff, where he writes a brief and modest account of his part in the previous day to Constantine Maugars, still absent on leave. He expresses a hope that at the end of the campaign he too will obtain leave and join him and his other friends at Chartres. On the 27th he is at Eschweiler, when he again writes to his friend, upbraiding him for his neglect in not answering his four letters.

Between these dates Marceau issued an *order of the day* to his divisions, which is as a flash of manly anger in the cause of discipline, humanity, and patriotism :

“During the last few days,” runs the order, “certain defenders of the country forming the advance-guard of the right wing of the army, appear to have forgotten the principles of humanity by which their conduct has hitherto been guided. Some, to their

great dishonour, have given themselves up to unbridled pillage ; others have done even worse. The officers, too, seem to be suffering from a most culpable apathy in allowing to be committed with impunity, and under their very eyes, all manner of offences, the least heinous of which must rouse the anger of every good Republican and of all who love order and their country. . . .

“ The general now gives notice that he will combat with the wrongs which the enemies of the Republic would make us suffer, and that he will do all in his power to expel forthwith from the army all those who, either by their weakness or ignorance, are responsible for these wrong doings. He therefore gives warning for the last time that all those Republican soldiers, who are found without leave at a distance from their posts, or are seen wandering about the villages, will be punished as deserters. Those who are found pillaging, or in possession of pillaged articles, will be punished with death. Those officers, who cannot when called upon give a proper explanation of the misconduct of their soldiers, or who from weakness let them go unpunished, will be handed over to the military commission, and tried as the accomplices of those who have actually infringed the orders.

“ Those who love their country and their duty will, I trust, see in this order the necessity for re-establishing harmony in the army, and for securing all those means that will insure us success against our enemies. Those, on the other hand, who would dishonour their comrades, and care little to win the esteem and affection of their fellow-citizens, or

who are not afraid of being ranked as thieves and robbers, will find in this order their own condemnation. These can be assured that nothing will prevent the general from enforcing among the soldiers of the Republic the principles of justice and humanity which should be their only guide and aim."

Marceau directed that this order should be read to each company, and that generals of brigade should insure it a wide publication.

### CHAPTER III.

*Battle of the Roer—Marceau reaches the Rhine—The capture of Coblenz—Its significance—The civil government of the Electorate—Release of Hippolyte—A desolate winter.*

ON the 30th September, Jourdan, previous to an advance, reviewed his army in a vast plain to the west of Aix-la-Chapelle. It afforded a magnificent spectacle, for, in array of numbers, in discipline, and that indefinable aspect of vigour and confidence that success and experience give to troops, the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse was at this time the finest in all Europe. On the day of the review the commander-in-chief unfurled before this army a standard which the National Convention had decreed to it, and which bore the inscription: "*To the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse from a grateful country.*"

Jourdan's plan to force the line of the Roer was similar to the one adopted with so much success on the Aywaille and the Ourthe. Now, as then, he determined to turn the left of the enemy's position, and, to this intent, Schérer was ordered to force the passages of the river between Niederplombach and Mirweiler, and to advance on Düren, while on his extreme right he occupied Niederau and Kreutzau

and so threatened the road to Cologne behind Düren. This attack was to be simultaneous with the advance of the left and centre, and each general was ordered to take his division as rapidly as possible to the position indicated to him.

At daybreak on the 2nd October, one hundred thousand Republicans moved forward in the most perfect order, massed in columns of brigades. The right wing left its camp at Eschweiler, and at 11 a.m. arrived on the heights of Mérode, where Schérer made his dispositions for the attack. Marceau was ordered to pass the ford of Mirweiler and to take Düren, with Mayer supporting him by a frontal attack on his right, while Hacquin's division was directed to make a circuit and cross the river at the ford of Vinden, occupy Kreutzau and Binsfeld, and so turn the extreme left of the Imperialists.

It was midday before these arrangements were completed. Hacquin was a long time in making the circuit by Vinden, and Schérer, in consequence, deferred his attack, thus giving time to Clerfayt to prepare for the frontal attack along the heights between Mirweiler and Niederau.

It was now 3 o'clock, and Schérer, growing impatient, threw the divisions of Marceau into the Roer. Marceau divided his troops into two columns. He launched Lorges's brigade on Düren, while at the head of the other brigade and his cavalry, he prepared to force the passage lower down the river.

After a warm engagement the ford of Mirweiler

was carried, Adjutant-General Klein setting the example to the soldiers by swimming the river at the head of the column. The Austrian intrenchments were next taken at the point of the bayonet, and Marceau established himself on the right bank of the river. Lorges meanwhile assailed the village of Düren. This post, defended by strong ramparts and ditches filled with water, and down the approaches to which the Austrians had pointed several batteries, was stubbornly defended. But nothing could resist the valour of Lorges's brigade ; the ramparts were stormed, and the French took possession of Düren under the very guns of the overhanging heights.

But Mayer had not come up on the right, and nothing had yet been heard of Hacquin. Marceau's position became critical, and he had to bear for some time the whole brunt of Latour's efforts. On Lorges attempting to deploy, he was overwhelmed by the fire of the batteries in the redoubts and on the heights behind, and was obliged to retire within the village for shelter. The Austrians, emboldened by their success, advanced to dislodge Lorges. His brigade was in imminent peril of being annihilated when Marceau, seeing the danger, and placing himself at the head of his squadrons, hastened to his aid from Mirweiler. By a brilliant and impetuous charge on their flank, Marceau broke through the heavy masses of the enemy, and saved Düren. Meanwhile Mayer, who had crossed the Roer opposite Niederau and Lindersdorf, and had been received by a galling fire of artillery, found himself



obliged to deploy, with the hope, by so doing, of connecting with Marceau on his left. This he succeeded in doing by 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

The efforts of both parties were now concentrated upon Düren. So far only Latour's advance-guards had been engaged. His main body, posted on the heights above, now came into action, and sixty pieces of cannon poured into Marceau's divisions a shower of shot and shell. But the two divisions held their ground heroically, and gave time to Hacquin to carry out the movement that had been prescribed to him.

Towards 7 o'clock Hacquin emerged from the woods of Kreutzau, and fell upon the enemy's left flank, and threatened their communications on the great Cologne road. The Imperialists were thus compelled to retreat, and withdrew the whole of their left wing from the heights above Buikersdorf, Düren, and Niederau.

While these events were taking place on the French right, in the centre Championnet had seized the plateau of Aldenhoven, and carried his pursuit to the very glacis of the fort of St. Jülich. Lefebvre, repulsing the Austrians at Linnich, also reached the Roer, while Kléber, by skilful manœuvring and a brisk and well sustained fire of artillery, kept the enemy fully engaged before him at Rathen.

But the decisive action was on the right, where Schérer had to support the efforts of Latour during several hours with the sole divisions of Marceau, and success had depended on the latter holding his position till the arrival of Hacquin. It will

thus be seen how materially Marceau contributed to the triumph of the Republican arms on the banks of the Roer on this day.

The French prepared to renew the contest, and at dawn of the following day the commanders of the advance-guards moved towards the citadel of St. Jülich, but only to find it evacuated. The Austrians, during the night, not only abandoned the Roer at all points, but the next day, fearing to be cut off from Coblentz and Cologne, they repassed the Rhine at Mühlheim and other places.

Marceau and Dubois were sent in pursuit of the retiring foe, and on the evening of the 4th October they came up with the rear-guards. By a single charge they put them to flight while in the act of deploying, and took 100 prisoners and a great number of horses. After this skirmish, Marceau's division pushed on and reached the great object of the campaign—the Rhine!

Both Jourdan and the representatives warmly eulogized Marceau in their reports; the former especially commented on his tenacious defence of Düren. Both on the Aywaille and the Roer, Marceau wiped out the memory of Fleurus, and established once more the valour of his divisions in the eyes of the Convention and the Republic.

The ultimate results of the battle of the Roer cannot easily be exaggerated. The Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse had pierced the centre of the immense line of the Allies, the victory decided the fate of Flanders, and it drove the Imperial army back on to the Rhine. Carnot said of the im-

portance of the victory: "It will be at least equal to that of Fleurus. It will be a landmark in French history, and it will cover with immortal renown all those who have contributed to this memorable success." Praises were lavished on Jourdan's army by the National Convention and by a "grateful country." Carnot, writing of the soldiers and officers of this army, reported "that these young warriors have shown to us that in firmness and stability they can surpass all that history tells us of the Greek phalanx or the Roman legion."

On the 6th October the French reached Cologne, and on the 12th we find Marceau established, with his headquarters, at Bonn. Kléber and Gillet had returned to the siege of Maastricht, which surrendered to them early in November. After the fall of this fortress and of Rhinfels there only remained to the Coalition, at the end of the year, Mayence and Luxembourg on the left bank of the Rhine; for Marceau, having been sent against Coblenz, turned the Allies, as we shall see, out of that strong position, and effected a junction with the Army of the Moselle advancing under René Moreaux from Treves.

For Marceau and his troops, whose strength had been taxed to the utmost by the events of the last few months, the next few days were days of comparative rest and leisure. But Coblenz still remained in the possession of the enemy, and, as Marceau pointed out in a letter to Jourdan, the French could not hope to remain in peaceable occupation of their winter quarters on the Rhine,

so long as this important place was in the hands of their opponents. It was necessary, moreover, that Jourdan should effect a junction with the Moselle Army on his right, and this could only be done by both armies extending their respective flanks in the direction of Coblenz. René Moreaux, who commanded the Army of the Moselle, did not, however, fall in with this plan, and consequently Marceau was ordered to march up the river and secure the ancient capital of the Carolingian emperors with his division alone.

The troops under Marceau's command had just finished an arduous campaign; one half of their number either filled the hospitals or were under medical treatment; they were sadly in need of clothes; the commissariat had already failed, and the supplies were insufficient and irregular. In the face of this, and the large numbers of the enemy around Coblenz, the undertaking was sufficiently hazardous, especially as the co-operation of the Army of the Moselle could not be relied on, whereas the Prussians might at any moment come to the assistance of the fortress.

Marceau, while obliged to Jourdan for the honourable distinction, and for the large field opened out to his troops by the task assigned to them, pointed out to him clearly the dangers and difficulties that attended it. He ends his letter, however, merrily enough, defining his line of march, arranged so as to deceive the enemy as to his purpose. After Heppingen and Andernach, he says, he will be at Coblenz. "I can see you already

smiling and saying, 'Stop, stop, citizen Marceau! are you not going rather too fast?'" Having secured his communications with Taponier, who commanded the left wing of the Moselle Army, and after he had informed this general of his plans, Marceau left Bonn on the 20th October for Coblenz.

The march was attended by many difficulties, and grave obstacles had to be surmounted. Marceau's letters to Jourdan are, however, uniformly cheerful, and enable us to follow him on his march day by day. On the 20th October he writes: "The rain falls incessantly, the main roads, at times mountainous, are deceptive and abominable, and the cross-roads we are sometimes obliged to take are no better. It took us twelve hours to cover a distance of one league. The soldiers' rations neither arrive in time nor in sufficient quantities. Shoes are wanting to the tune of thousands." He is not now astonished, he says, in another letter, at the sluggishness of the Army of the Moselle. His zeal and his ardour are, however, still unabated, and he hopes to be at Andernach the next day.

On the 22nd October he arrived at Andernach, where, after a successful engagement with two divisions of the enemy, he pushed a reconnaissance towards Coblenz itself. "To-morrow," he writes, "it is my purpose to move my entire division against Coblenz." He hopes Taponier will co-operate, although, so far, the Army of the Moselle has not shown any signs of life.

On the 23rd October the enemy's camp, situated

on some hills half a mile outside the town of Coblentz, was attacked at the break of day. Marceau's cavalry routed that of the Austrians, and compelled it to take shelter behind the numerous intrenchments they had thrown up. Then followed a lively cannonade on both sides, but it did not last long, as the French cavalry, by a favourite manœuvre of Marceau's, turned the position behind the intrenchments, while the infantry attacked it in front. The Austrians fled into the town, and were so closely pursued that had they not destroyed the bridge over the Moselle, a large number would have been cut off and captured, in spite of the fire from the earthworks on the right bank of the river and from the fortress itself.

In his despatch to Jourdan on the subject, from which the above description is taken, Marceau proceeds to relate how he effected the capture of the fortress itself : "The impossibility of gaining possession by main force of a town, which, as you know, is commanded by a strong fortress, . . . induced me to propose to the Austrian general that he should surrender it to me conditionally. My proposition was supported by what was only meant as a menace, namely, that in case of his refusal I would reduce it to ashes." To this General Mélas replied : "Sharing your sentiments I have determined to surrender the town of Coblentz to you to-morrow, the 24th October, at 8 o'clock in the morning." The Austrians were allowed to march out with all their arms and cannon, and on the same morning the tricolor flag floated on the ram-

parts of one of the strongest fortresses of the Rhine. Two brigades of the Army of the Moselle arrived on the heights of Coblentz on the afternoon of the battle, only in time to assist Marceau in enforcing the capitulation by their presence.

In his report Marceau rendered full justice to his soldiers, praising their patience on the arduous march, as well as their ardour during the attack. His warmest praise is, however, reserved for the cavalry, a branch of the service which had become especially proficient under the training it received from Marceau and his staff. The report to Jourdan ends with a humorous postscript : " Another would have delighted to have composed a brilliant letter describing our brilliant expedition, but, for us, to fight with determination is better than all the flowers of rhetoric. The affair was warm, but here we are ! "

In forwarding Marceau's report on the capitulation of Coblentz to the National Convention, Jourdan added the remark : " This document is all the more interesting, in that it is dictated and marked by modesty. "

The news of the fall of the fortress was received by all Republicans throughout France with transports of joy. Coblentz had been the place of rendezvous of all the so-called emigrants, noble or otherwise, who had fled their country, and were held to be traitors to France, and the principal instigators of the war. Hence the honour decreed to those who had taken part in the enterprise was all the greater now that the tricolor floated over

the town hateful to all Republicans for its royal memories and its painful associations. On the 27th October Marceau wrote to Jourdan on this subject as follows: "The tree of liberty was planted yesterday opposite the palace of the Elector. The tree of liberty at Coblenz! . . . . After all, it is not so much out of place to have the symbol and emblem of liberty where the monster once resided!"

Though the peaceable possession of the Rhine was secured, Jourdan and Gillet were anxious, because they found their forces far too widely dispersed, and Maastricht still held out. Marceau shared their anxieties. An additional division was sent to reinforce him, and he was charged with watching the Rhine from Andernach to Rheinfeld, taking over some of the cantonments occupied by the Army of the Moselle. Nothing could exceed the disgraceful state in which he found these cantonments, the whole region moreover had been ruined and devastated by Moreaux's troops, neither food nor forage could be obtained. This added considerably to the difficulties of Marceau's task, namely, of effectually guarding the Rhine, and of providing for his troops during an exceptionally severe winter, when both the Rhine and the Meuse were frozen over, and no longer offered a barrier against the forces of the Allies.

At Coblenz Marceau arranged for the civil government of the country under his occupation. In this he displayed, as might have been expected, the greatest magnanimity and the most liberal views



on the subject of government. He left to the towns their own burgomasters and native magistrates, with all their administrative and judicial functions, and endeavoured by all means within his reach to conciliate the hostile population into whose homes he had introduced war and all its unrighteous accompaniments.

In the midst of his troubles arising out of the effectual guarding of the Rhine, at least one source of consolation fell to the lot of Marceau after the capture of Coblenz. For it was now that he learnt of the release of Hippolyte Leprêtre, after a detention of six months in a Paris prison. Emira and Sergent had not ceased to exert themselves in the interests of the young man, and Madame Leprêtre, who had joined them for the purpose in Paris, was able to contribute her portion by a lavish use of subsidies to those civilians of the capital with whom rested the fate of her innocent son. After Hippolyte's release both mother and son wrote to Marceau, whose heart might well beat with a twofold joy at the thought of the safety of his friend, and that it would no longer be possible for the obdurate count to refuse his consent, after the services rendered to his family by Marceau and his relatives.

To Hippolyte, Marceau wrote on the 29th October ; " Your detention and its cause have always been an enigma to me, for, in spite of my earnest requests, no one has yet thought fit to give me an explanation. In endeavouring, as much as it lay in my power, to procure you your liberty, I only

followed the dictates of my own heart. My love for my sister will henceforth have *increased twofold*, if that be possible, by the knowledge that she has obtained your satisfaction and has contributed to your liberty." Marceau enclosed an undated order to Hippolyte to enable him to join him whenever he cared to do so, regretting that he could not have him as his aide-de-camp, as the rules only allowed him to have two. He concludes with the hope that during the ensuing winter he will be able to visit Paris. It will perhaps be as well to mention here that Hippolyte never availed himself of Marceau's order, for, out of deference to his father's undoubted political convictions, he never again rejoined Marceau or the army of the Republic.

A few days later he replies to Madame Leprêtre's letter, asking her that her son might be allowed to rejoin him. "Perhaps," he adds, "I shall have the pleasure of coming myself to take him away from you. The fall of Maastricht, while assuring us our winter quarters, may at the same time give me some hope of obtaining leave of absence, during which it will be a pleasure to assure you once more, and in person, of my gratitude and my respect." This letter is formal enough, but we can read it with the eyes of the hopeful mother, whose aim it is to unite her daughter by the most sacred bonds to one eminently worthy in her esteem of such a favour.

Another source of consolation to Marceau, at this time, was in the prospect of the return of his friend Maugars to duty. "Your letter," he writes to the latter, "has given me great pleasure, dear friend.

You are then coming back to me, if so I am content. Lose no time, and set out on your journey at once. . . . You will see my sister, and perhaps, also, Hippolyte, who is at the *Marais*. It will give me great pleasure if you will visit this last-mentioned place and examine the faces there, and see whether you are satisfied with the family, and with the young man in particular."

What Marceau thought of matrimony and of the married state we can gather from a letter written at this time, that is, after his hopes had been raised by the news of Hippolyte's liberation. "I congratulate you," he writes from Bonn to his dear friend, "on the vows you are about to take. They alone can hold out to us any hope of happiness. From what I know of your character, I feel sure that matrimony has sweet joys in store for you. I only regret that, in the midst of what we call *glory*, I am unable to witness your happiness, or to follow your example in taking to myself a young and charming companion. *It is only then, my dear friend, that we can call ourselves happy, all else is merely ephemeral.* Friendship alone compensates us for the immense void we must feel in our lives when, so to speak, we have no one to cling to."

But for what we know of the emotions that filled Marceau's heart at this time, they would strike us strangely now, these tender words of longing for the love that compensates, and the peace that satisfies more than all the glory and the pageant of war, written as they were during watch and ward in the face of a foe beaten, but at bay, and by one whose

name and achievements had already been heralded with pride and honour throughout the length and breadth of a great republic, of a grateful country.

For the rest, the months of November and December were sad enough for Marceau, and taxed to the utmost his energies and patience. Throughout a rigorous winter, and almost isolated from the rest of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse, he had to guard Coblenz and eighteen miles of the Rhine, along a mountainous and wasted tract of country, and in face of a greatly superior foe, who might at any moment advance and overwhelm him. He had 11,000 men under him, but his force was decimated by disease, want, and exposure, which rendered the task set before him almost a hopeless one, and postponed indefinitely all chances of obtaining leave from the army. He lost, moreover, about this time, his friend Jourdan, who, in spite of his great successes, had been called away to Paris to answer certain charges preferred against him by his enemies. Kléber, too, was absent with the Army of the Moselle, which invested Mayence under his skill and guidance.

This destitution, his critical position, the sad plight of his soldiers, and the ever-vanishing hope of obtaining leave to see once more the face of the sweet girl with whom he had plighted troth, plunged Marceau, in this winter of 1794-95, in deep melancholy. Read in the light of after events, there is something inexpressibly touching, and yet instructive too, in a letter addressed to one Cochon about this time. "I am sorry," writes Marceau, "not to

be able to respond to your wishes in the matter of furnishing you with materials for a biography of myself. Accept for your kind intentions the thanks of one to whom your letter has given the greatest pleasure ; but give up, my friend, your project of writing, and seek some worthier object, not so much for its virtues, for I pretend to practise these as much as anyone, but for the variety and abundance of the material that can be procured. As for me, possessed of small means, I have, by dint of hard work compelled fortune to favour me a little. I owe my position to my ardent nature, my disinterested patriotism, and to the interest I have always taken in my profession. . . . *After the peace, if I live to see it*, we can give ourselves up to the pleasure of some joint labour of love, either of the kind you desire to undertake or some other."

"There is," says Maze, "a sort of desolate prophecy in the words *after the peace, if I live to see it*. Marceau seems to have had a sad presentiment that he never would witness this peace." So true it is, we say, that in this world the highest natures suffer most, and live and die furthest off from the realization of their dreams.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Enforced inactivity—The destitution of Marceau's troops—Brutus and Cassius—Calumnies of the press—Jourdan's passage of the Rhine—Marceau's part in it—The burning of the bridge of Neuwied—Reconciliation with Kléber.*

ALMOST the entire first portion of the year 1795 Marceau passed in comparative inactivity. He had, it is true, to be as vigilant as before on the Rhine, and the construction of intrenched camps at Bonn, Coblenz, and elsewhere, demanded all his energy and his constant supervision ; but want, we might almost say famine, paralysed Jourdan's army and confined it to its fortified camps and strong places on the left bank of the Rhine. "The absence of all care and forethought in the military administration, the unfitness and indifference of the men whom it comprised, created for us," says a French writer, "the most cruel and embarrassing situation, and wellnigh brought ruin on our country."

It was proposed at this period to add another division, that of Vincent, from the Army of the Rhine, to the forces already under Marceau's command. For reasons that will appear presently, Marceau sought to prevent this, and, for the purpose,

again had recourse to his friend Gillet. In the absence of Jourdan it was on Gillet that he mainly relied, and in all his letters Marceau expresses a deep and sincere attachment for this upright and conscientious civilian. At the beginning of the year he confesses to this staunch friend that he no longer possesses the "tranquillity of soul" that constituted his happiness during the last campaign. He rejoices to hear the news of Gillet's return after a temporary absence from the army. "Sad at heart and dejected in spirit, I felt overwhelmed this evening with the darkness, as it were, of my night, when your letter reached me. Its effect on me was like that of balm when first applied to a long neglected wound."

Marceau had his own way in the matter of the undesirable addition to his command, and, though he was relieved of the defence of Coblenz, Vincent's division never became a portion of the force for which he was responsible. This was not, however, brought about without a passage of arms with Kléber, who was in the first instance responsible for the proposed transfer. "What!" wrote Marceau to his friend, "you send into this country, which you know to be devoid of all resources whatsoever, an entire division with, seriously speaking, no commissariat at all! And this under the specious pretext that it forms a part of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse! Do those who act in this manner believe in their hearts that they are satisfactorily performing their duty or rightly discharging their responsibilities? It is far from being

so, and the ghosts of the soldiers who perish of cold and hunger will cry out against the criminal indifference of the agents who have acted in this manner towards the defenders of the country."

Other letters show a more bitter spirit still, and prove that the relations between the two friends must have been somewhat strained, especially on the part of Kléber, whom Marceau reproaches for wilfully misunderstanding him. There is no doubt that the hearts of all were sore at this trying season, and to this source the mutual recriminations can be traced. In this present instance there was, however, one other cause, namely, the attitude of Kléber towards Jourdan. He criticized his chief's plans, disobeyed his orders, and altogether showed so rebellious a disposition that, in the end, Jourdan was obliged to arrest him and suspend him from all his functions. We think, after weighing all the facts, that Marceau sided very properly with Jourdan, and rightly blamed Kléber for his timidity and irresolution, which led him to thwart his chief and prevented the development of his undoubtedly great military talents. We shall presently see under what circumstances this friendship was renewed and restored to, if it had ever lost, its pristine strength and perfection.

Kléber himself was at this time conducting, much against his will, the investment of Mayence defended by 20,000 Austrians. In the month of March of this year, 1795, he wrote to Marceau the following brief letter, which throws a side-light on Jourdan and his army :



“ I have just received the order from the Committee of Public Safety to return to the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse. My joy is unbounded ! As for you, move heaven and earth not to leave it ! ”

Meanwhile this army, to which its commanders were so closely attached, continued to suffer, and with the sufferings of his troops rose the indignation of Marceau against those responsible for their miserable plight. He appeals to Ernouf, Chief of the Staff, and to Gillet against the criminal indifference of the agents, “ those rogues and rascals,” as he calls them, “ of the administrative service.” He points out how subversive of discipline this privation must be, and that, although want has been more or less felt during the past two months, it has now reached its climax ; there has been no bread for two days, and the murmurs in the camp have become loud and dangerous. As for punishing the soldiers against whom complaints are made, how can this be done, he asks, when with magazines full and near at hand, they are left to starve ? “ Assuredly,” the letter concludes, “ Tantalus himself was not so cruelly tried ! ”

So great was the destitution of the army that the soldiers were allowed by their officers to roam the country, disguised as peasants and as beggars, in search of their daily food. To the utter collapse of the administration was principally due the ill-success that the arms of the Republic met with during the eventful year 1795, ushered in with so many hopes founded on the glorious campaign of the previous year.

Though Marceau felt the keenest sympathy for his soldiers in their misery and did all that was in his power to remove the cause of their sufferings, he enforced the strictest discipline, and adhered closely to the terms of his order of the day quoted in a previous chapter. He was especially severe against all forms of pillage and unauthorized requisition and extended his protection as far as possible to the unhappy people whose country had become the scene of this protracted and omnivorous war.

In spite of this attitude, both the foreign and French journals were full at this time of calumnies directed against Marceau, of scurrilous letters purporting to have been written from Treves, and complaining of the vexations of the inhabitants and the expense which they had been put to by Marceau's exactions and requisitions in general, and his indulgence at all costs in the *chasse*, in particular. Marceau felt himself under the necessity of writing to the municipality of Treves on these subjects. In their reply the municipal administrators and officers of that town expressed their surprise that such complaints had been made, and such reports circulated, for they were entirely ignorant, they said, of the facts on which they were based. After admitting that the gravest injustice had been done to Marceau by either ignorant or vindictive persons, they go on to say, in conclusion :

“You see, therefore, that the calumniators by their self-evident falsehoods have proclaimed themselves to be our enemies as well as yours, since they have supposed it possible for us to reproach you for

that which is in the order of things, and dictated by circumstances. We are all the less able to reproach you for aught, seeing that we are one and all ready to testify that since you have been in occupation of our town, you have had order and justice for your guides in all your transactions, and you have procured us some measure of peace, for which we shall be ever grateful to you."

These were the only matters, outside his proper sphere of duty, which Marceau concerned himself about ; for all else, of a political or civil nature, he showed great indifference, mindful only of the state of his troops and of the military tasks assigned to him as a soldier of the Republic. In his profession he had not yet risen to the important height that made Jourdan nervous and Pichegru a traitor. He served the cause more humbly and, as compared with the latter, more faithfully, and yielded to neither in singleness or tenacity of purpose.

The insurrection of the First Prairial, Year III. (20th May), the downfall of the *Mountain*, the decrees of death and deportation against the former Terrorist deputies, events which, at this time, once more roused Paris and all France, were of little importance or interest to Marceau on the Rhine. To his friend Gillet, who was naturally anxious as a deputy and civilian, he writes that he will not pass an opinion on any of these events, that he is too far from the scene to be able to judge of them, and a stranger to all political quarrels which distract France and the Convention. As for himself and those engaged like him, he writes : " Our wishes, our efforts, and all

our labours have but one end, that of the Republic one and indivisible." He only complains when the welfare of his soldiers is neglected, and the rights of his officers ignored.

But this period of inactivity was at last over. On the 6th September Jourdan commenced his brilliant and perilous passage of the Rhine, which he successfully effected at Eichelcamp, Düsseldorf, and Neuwied, and established himself on the Lahn a fortnight after. The passage of the river at Neuwied, in which Marceau was engaged with several other divisions, was not seriously opposed ; the Austrians guarding the approaches, fearing to be turned, retreated in haste and fell back on Nassau. The passage had been facilitated by the construction of a bridge of pontoons and boats brought up from Metz and the Moselle. On the retreat of the enemy the other divisions marched on to join Jourdan on the Lahn, while Marceau was left to protect this bridge, and to reduce at the same time the important and famous fortress of Ehrenbreitstein on the right bank of the river, and defended by a garrison of 3,600 Austrians and a numerous artillery of heavy guns.

While Jourdan descended, therefore, into the rich valley of the Maine with the bulk of his army, and invested Mayence from the right bank of the Rhine, Marceau, left with 11,000 men, commenced a *tête de pont* before the crossing at Neuwied, fortified the islands of the river, and opened the lines of Montaubauer, which were to form the investment of Ehrenbreitstein.

Though superior in numbers to the garrison, he was absolutely without the means or material needed to reduce so formidable a fortress, and his efforts were confined to blockading the enemy within the walls and cutting off all its supplies.

Although Marceau did not take part in Jourdan's advance, he kept him informed of all the movements of the enemy towards Coblenz and the Lower Rhine. On the 9th September he writes to congratulate his chief on his successful passage: "You know me well enough, I think," he says, "to be convinced that this is not a cold compliment that I offer, but the precise expression of a heart sincerely attached to you." He has very little important news to communicate in his letter, his story is the old story: "Always want of bread, always want of meat, and always some new rascally trick on the part of the administrators!"

The siege works supervised by Marceau were carried on and completed with rare intelligence and energy, and after some lively actions, the garrison of 3,600 men was entirely cut off from all outside communication, and strictly confined within the walls of the fortress. Scarcely had this been effected when the siege had to be abandoned owing to the retreat of the army of the Sambre-and-Meuse. It is convenient to record here that in his report to the Committee of Public Safety, Ernouf, the chief of Jourdan's staff, acknowledged, in terms of praise, the services rendered by Marceau before Neuwied and Ehrenbreitstein, and the measures taken by him to insure the safety of Jourdan's retreat. The orders

of Marceau at the same time show with what severity he maintained order and discipline among his troops, both along the river and within the lines of investment.

We have seen Jourdan advance as far as Mayence and the Maine. At the same time Pichegru, with the Army of the Rhine, crossed that river and took Mannheim. Clerfayt, with 94,000 men, now opposed Jourdan, while Wurmser, with 79,500 more, guarded the Upper Rhine and the valley of the Neckar against Pichegru. To insure success in the presence of these overwhelming odds, it was necessary that Pichegru should cross the Rhine in force and seize Heidelberg, the key to the valley of the Neckar, and that both armies should then advance between the Maine and the Neckar, and, from their concentric position, deal with each of the Austrian armies in succession. Pichegru, however, either failed to grasp the situation, or else treacherously omitted to carry out what was so obviously required of him. The French were in consequence driven from the Neckar, and Jourdan was left *en flèche* in the heart of Germany, exposed to the full attack of Clerfayt's forces, which could at any time be reinforced by a portion of those under Wurmser.

A position such as Jourdan's could not long be maintained, and on the night of the 15th October the retreat of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse commenced. It was effected in three columns. Kléber conducted that of the right by Wiesbaden and Nassau to Montabauer, where he effected a junction with Marceau's division.

This division had been selected to form the rear-guard of Kléber's column after junction with it, and Marceau was expressly ordered by Jourdan to take all measures necessary to secure the retreat of this column across the Rhine, to sink or burn his flotilla of boats after he had raised the siege he had been conducting, and, if hard pressed, to abandon the *tête de pont* of Neuwied, and destroy the bridge itself after the last of the troops had crossed over in safety.

Kléber arrived on the heights of Neuwied on the 18th October, and found the bridge in flames, and himself and some 25,000 men cut off from their only retreat, and at the mercy of the Austrians, who might at any moment fall on them in overwhelming numbers and drive them into the Rhine.

This burning of the bridge of Neuwied is a well-known incident of military history, and the blunder or accident that caused it has been unjustly and wrongly attributed by more than one writer, including the great Jomini, to Marceau, directly by some, and indirectly by others.

We have seen that Marceau received an order from Jourdan to sink or burn all boats, great or small, on the right bank of the river, or forming part of his siege flotilla, after the last of the troops had crossed over by the bridge, or otherwise. Marceau entrusted the execution of this order to an officer of engineers, Captain Souhait, one of his staff, while he himself superintended the evacuation by his troops of the intrenched camp of Metternich and the lines of investment. All went well, and Marceau arrived at the head of his siege corps on a height overlook-

ing the left bank of the river. Here he saw, like Kléber, his bridge of boats and pontoons in flames, and the only connection with the right bank severed.

Realizing at a glance what had happened, Marceau galloped down to the scene with his aide-de-camp, Maugars. He found the bridge destroyed beyond all remedy, and Kléber's troops at the mercy of the enemy. Grasping the awful state of affairs and recognizing, with his quick, sensitive nature, that the blame of it would attach to him as commander of the rear-guard, he fell into the deepest despair and, it is said, would have taken his own life there and then, but for the energy and affectionate intervention of his friend and aide-de-camp, Maugars. When he had recovered himself, Marceau wrote a hurried note to Kléber, taking the entire blame on himself, and begging of him to come to his succour, to repair the fatal blunder, which would bring disaster on the army. Kléber replied in most affectionate terms, telling Marceau he need not be anxious, that there would be no loss to the army, as he intended to fight and keep the enemy at bay, and that meanwhile the only remedy under the circumstances would be to repair the bridge as speedily as possible.

Captain Souhait, to whom the order for the destruction of the boats was entrusted, admitted afterwards to the whole army that the accident that ensued on his execution of it was entirely his own fault, and due, not to the orders of his general, but to his own precipitancy in carrying them out.



It appears that this officer, on the appearance of some of the enemy's cavalry on the right bank, caused all the boats on that side to be burnt. The burning vessels, abandoned to the stream, were carried down with the drift towards the bridge of Neuwied, against which they struck with violence, breaking through it at some points, and, at others, setting fire to the boats and pontoons of which it was constructed. In this manner the bridge was speedily either carried away or consumed, and Kléber cut off on the right bank with 25,000 men of the right wing of the army.

Kléber's situation was desperate enough on the night of the 18th October, but, fortunately for him, Clerfayt, ignorant of the accident, had relinquished the pursuit and halted on the Lahn, and only pressed the retreat by sending a small corps of cavalry as far as Montabauer. Had he attacked the next day he would probably have found it hard to dislodge Kléber, then reinforced by Bernadotte's division, which had recrossed the river to support him.

On this day, at dawn, Kléber, who had heard of Marceau's anxiety, and knowing his sensitive, impulsive nature, jumped into a boat, and crossed the river alone. He came to his friend's assistance in answer to his appeal, both to dissipate his despair, and to help him out of his dilemma.

The rest of the story is best told in the words of Marceau's sister, Emira, and her husband Sergent, who were both present at the time on the Rhine, and witnessed the first meeting of the two friends. "I was at the time," writes Emira, in a letter to the

“Constitutionnel,” defending her brother against certain allegations of another journal, in connection with this event, “by my brother’s side, and here I was informed of what had happened. General Kléber, who, like Marceau, only commanded a division, had been for some time somewhat cold towards my brother. Kléber now embraced him, and spoke to him in these words: ‘*Have you then forgotten that Kléber is near you? Have you no longer any faith in your friend? Have you forgotten that he has sworn affection till death to his brother in arms? Come, let us mount our horses and all will be remedied.*’ As a matter of fact they were during the whole of that day together, after this, on the other bank of the river.”

Sergent confirms Emira as to the words (noble, generous, precious words) in which Kléber first addressed Marceau, and adds that he witnessed the spectacle of the burning of the bridge of boats, and next day saw the two generals on horseback going towards Bendorf. According to Sergent it was Emira herself who communicated her brother’s state of mind to Kléber, and thus induced him to cross the river at the dawn of the day that witnessed their reconciliation.

Kléber, who had throughout looked calmly on the accident to the bridge, attributed the mistake to an order badly carried out. He sent for the officer in command of his corps of engineers, and in twenty-four hours communication between the two banks of the river was re-established, the enemy being meanwhile kept at bay by the bold front

shown to them by Kléber and Bernadotte. The former general, in reporting on the incident, wrote : "The disaster is repaired. Where I had expected prostration I found nothing but energy of spirit. By such means all reverses can be set aright."

The day following the destruction of the bridge, Marceau wrote to Jourdan. The following extract from this letter will help to remove, if that be any longer necessary, the burden so unjustly transferred, as we have said, on to Marceau's shoulders :

"The raising of the blockade, my general, has been carried out in such a manner that the enemy never knew of it, and in consequence did nothing to disquiet us. Yesterday, the 26th Vendémiaire (19th October), during the morning, all the troops should have passed the Rhine, but for this unfortunate accident of which you already know the circumstances. Dejected in mind, heavy at heart, and with my nerves wound up to an indescribable pitch, I am unable to write to you at any length now. I have employed my time in repairing what the premature and heedless execution of an otherwise wise order might have turned into a serious evil. Although in this matter I had nothing to reproach myself for, I would have paid with my life for the faults of another. Not of another, properly speaking, but of those whom he employed under him. The placid Austrian has not wished it to be so, nor has he discovered our position. To-day, all is in the state of order it ought to have been in before."

After obliging Jourdan to recross the Rhine and return to his cantonments on the left bank of that

river, the Imperial army of Clerfayt turned its attention to Mayence, blockaded on the left bank by the French, first under Kléber, and then under Schaal, more or less closely since the beginning of the year. Marceau and his division occupied the country between Oberwesel and Coblenz. He had been relieved of the defence of the *tête de pont* of Neuwied and of the fortified islands above Coblenz shortly before they fell into the hands of the Austrians, who were thus once more entire masters of the right bank of the Rhine between Mayence and Düsseldorf.

## CHAPTER V.

*Emira comes to raise fresh hopes—In the defiles and gorges of the Hundsrück—Kreuznach—Jourdan's advance—Marceau's defeat on the Glann and Nahe—Victory of Sultzbach—Negotiations with Kray—The armistice.*

ONCE more in cantonments, with the great river between him and the enemy, Marceau enjoyed a few days of rest and leisure. We have seen under what circumstances he had met his sister Emira, and how the latter was the instrument of his reconciliation with Kléber, a reconciliation effected in the face of a grave danger which might have proved fatal to both. Emira had once or twice before visited her brother on the Rhine, and, on this occasion, had come to meet him at Neuwied, where she had been awaiting him two days before Kléber arrived.

Emira came to announce to her brother an event which touched his dearest interests. This was the separation that had been mutually agreed upon between the Count and Countess of Châteaugiron, the parents of his bride-elect. Marceau had continued to write to Agathe through her mother, and their long separation had not been able to diminish the love they bore each other. The count, who

had been all along aware of his wife's projects and of this secret correspondence, had not so far obtruded his objections. But, when other plans for the disposal of his daughter's hand presented themselves, he emphatically declared to his wife that, while acknowledging his gratitude to Marceau, nothing would induce him to disgrace his ancestral house, with its royal traditions, by an alliance with a bourgeois general of the Republic. The countess refused to give way, and so the pair parted company, the count remaining in the country with Hippolyte, while the countess came and established her home in Paris with Agathe.

The news must have been all the more gratifying to Marceau, as it contained the assurance that Agathe, who would soon be of age, was fully in accord with her mother, and in obeying her was following the dictates of her own heart by marrying the man they both loved and considered worthy of her. Coming, as it did, soon after the affair of the bridge of Neuwied, the assurance must have been as balm to the bruised soul of the young warrior who had suffered so much during the last few months, and whose hopes had reached so low an ebb.

And so Marceau poured out his whole soul to Emira. She listened attentively, and humoured him, at least for the present, "while under his tent, and to the far-off accompaniment of the great river, this fearless soldier, this leader of armies, painted for her, with strokes of tender emotion, the new life that awaited him, a life of labour still, but

sweet and tranquil in itself, a life bound up with that of an adorable companion, who would bring to him the happiness that true love alone can insure."

In her heart Emira objected strongly to the union, which was in her eyes an unnatural one, and inadvisable in the face of the count's opposition, and though she listened patiently to her brother now, she did not fail to use all her influence and persuasion afterwards, in order to put an end to the engagement in the interests of both parties.

We have paused, however, to dwell on this scene between brother and sister, because it is the last time the clouds part asunder for Marceau, and show the eternal blue of heaven that should have environed the whole life of one whom nature had made for the appreciation of the sweets of love and the blessings of peace. Because, again, Marceau was at this period in the very prime and vigour of his life, when, in spite of defeat and disaster, hope still beat strong in his breast. We pause because, hereafter, the heavens will smile no more for him, and the hope, like the full young life, will be cut off and perish.

Clerfayt, having driven Jourdan once more across the Rhine, turned towards Mayence and the French lines of investment on the left bank of the river. On the 29th October, the same day as the attack on the islands above Coblenz and on the *tête de pont* of Neuwied, the French army of investment was utterly defeated in its lines, and the blockade of Mayence raised. As a first result of this defeat,

Marceau found his right flank exposed to the attack of Clerfayt's army, while Jourdan rightly considered he might be cut off from Treves and Luxembourg, should the Austrians elect to advance in force towards the Moselle.

On the first news of the disaster to Schaal's corps, Jourdan, who did not yet know its extent, detached Marceau with 8,100 men into the Hunds-rück, not so much to impose on the enemy and create a diversion in favour of the Army of the Rhine-and-Moselle, as to protect his own cantonments, now threatened by the Imperial army. Marceau's orders were to advance on to the Nahe if possible, otherwise to cover Treves and Luxembourg, and to defend the line of the Moselle at all costs.

The Hundsrück, through which he was ordered to operate, is a difficult mountainous tract of country, a prolongation, in fact, of the Vosges, and lying between the Moselle, the Rhine and the Nahe. The enemy held in force all the passes leading into this region and outwards to Treves. The task assigned therefore to Marceau's small force, so small in comparison with the enemy's that he could not hazard the risk or the loss of pitched battles, was arduous enough and needed the greatest caution on his part. In spite of this and the severity of the season, he entered on the campaign, if not with a light heart, yet with all his usual enthusiasm and ardour.

The march began towards the end of October. On the last day of that month he defeated the



enemy at Bacharach, and encamped on the heights of Lambschied, where he awaited reinforcements which had been promised by Jourdan. These came, however, from an unexpected direction, for soon after, Poncet, with six battalions of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse, on being driven back from Mayence, retreated towards Stromberg, and effected a junction with Marceau, who was thus placed in command of 14,000 to 15,000 men. Poncet's troops were located between the Rhine and Marceau, and effectually prevented any attempt being made on his left flank by the enemy from the direction either of Bingen or Mayence.

In the first days of November Marceau penetrates as far as Simmern, taking possession of the outlets and gorges of the Hundsrück in his immediate front. Before pushing on to the Nahe he has to await horses and reinforcements promised by Jourdan for he has no remounts for his cavalry, and the enemy are three times more numerous in this arm than the French. As for the division of the Army of the Rhine-and-Moselle covering Luxembourg, he finds it consists of an isolated force of only 2,000 men, and yet his capability of maintaining himself on the Nahe will depend absolutely on this division holding out at Kirn; otherwise the enemy will occupy the line of the Saar and push on to Treves, and he will be obliged to abandon even the Hundsrück. In view of this eventuality he makes inquiries as to his means of retreat, and finds that the only bridge over the Moselle by which he could effect his retreat, that

at Trarbach, has been demolished. He writes to Jourdan, pointing out how he is situated, and impressing on him the necessity of re-establishing this bridge and another at Mühlheim.

As soon as the promised hussars arrived, Marceau took possession of Kirn and formed a cordon of outposts along the Simmern, which falls into the Nahe below that town. He hoped by this move to be able to meet any attempt the enemy might make on Treves between himself and the division of the Moselle Army.

But his position was a dangerous one at best, and the season so severe that his troops suffered horribly. On the 8th November he wrote to Kléber: "Two days hence at latest I shall hazard an engagement, not so much to drive these gentlemen away from the left bank of the Nahe as to discover for certain their strength and their designs, and to disturb their moral superiority, if Dame Fortune should smile on me." He has long had a presentiment, he goes on to say, that he will never be happy again; the events of the last year confirm this view of his existence. "Nevertheless," he adds, "I have found you again my friend, and I am less miserable since I made this discovery. And yet, how far from happiness am I not under the present conditions?"

On the 10th November, Marceau took possession of the gorges and steep heights of Stromberg, a strong position defended by numerous guns, and drove the enemy beyond the Nahe. The troops of his left wing were engaged all day, and behaved gal-

lantly ; animated by him, they charged the enemy defending the successive gorges, and would have cut them to pieces but for some woods which facilitated their retreat. Marceau, although victorious, wrote to Jourdan after the battle, pointing out his critical position in the presence of a foe twice as numerous : " The nature of the country," he says, " the astonishing number of openings and defiles, and the difficulty of communicating between the different points require, if the line of the Nahe from Bingen to Kirn is to be successfully held, a force of at least fifteen to eighteen thousand infantry and four or five thousand cavalry." Then there is always the chance of the Moselle division being beaten, in which case he will have to throw troops into Treves and retreat as best he can across the Moselle, which is not spanned by a single bridge. He will, however, do all that depends on him, only he asks Jourdan to cast a glance at his situation and to give him the benefit of his advice.

Jourdan himself was too much discouraged and too sick at heart, at this time, to come to his friend's assistance, and thus Marceau was allowed to remain isolated on the Nahe, opposed by an enemy who might have risen and crushed him and his entire force in the gorges of Stromberg and the hills and ravines of the Soonwald.

It was not to be supposed that Marceau would be left in peaceable occupation of the banks of the Nahe. On the 11th November, the day following the victory in the gorges, he was in his turn attacked by the enemy. The contest was even more severe

than that of the previous day. The Republicans, though far inferior in numbers, were entirely successful. Not only was the enemy driven across the Nahe with a loss of 400 men, but Marceau, in spite of the determined resistance of the two brigades forming its garrison, gained possession of the important outpost of Kreuznach, a small town on the left bank of the Nahe.

The defeated garrison of this town being reinforced the same day by eighteen battalions of foot and thirty squadrons of horse under Wartensleben, Marceau, in face of such overwhelming numbers, thought it prudent to abandon Kreuznach. The retreat was commenced at dawn of the day following the capture of the town, and was carried out under Marceau's personal supervision with the greatest precision and order. "The brigades of Riesch and Sohn," writes Jomini, in commenting on this retrograde movement, "under the orders of General Burghach offered a stubborn resistance to Marceau, and although he succeeded in dislodging them from Kreuznach, he thought it prudent to evacuate that post at the dawn of day; a resolution all the less blameable as the enemy lost no time in arraying far more formidable forces against him."

The central position occupied at this time by Clerfayt and Wurmser enabled them both to cover the siege of Mannheim and to prevent the junction of the Republican armies of Pichegru and Jourdan. The embarrassment of the latter general was considerably increased by the loss of the bridge of Neuwied and by the daily increasing want of

provisions, in a country whose devastated area widened around him. Doubtful as to the result of a strong demonstration on the Nahe, Jourdan resolved to reinforce his right wing at Simmern and then await the orders of his government. Leaving Kléber at Coblenz and Neuwied, and Hatry at Düsseldorf, he moved his headquarters and five divisions towards Simmern, thus preventing the Austrians from taking any advantage of Marceau's isolated position.

As for Pichegru, on the 14th November he was defeated at Frankenthal and compelled to retreat behind the lines of the Queich. On the receipt of the news of this disaster, the Directory sent pressing orders to Jourdan to arrest the progress of the enemy by all the means in his power, and to take what steps he could to relieve the pressure on Mannheim. Jourdan's army was with difficulty organized. At length, on the 26th November, he put himself at the head of 40,000 men and advanced from Simmern, through the Soonwald and Hochwald, to the Nahe, in the midst of most inclement weather. The advance-guard of this expeditionary force was commanded by Marceau and covered a front of some fifteen miles from Martinstein to Birkenfeld.

Marceau had already put himself in motion. On the 23rd November he occupied Kirn and Oberstein on the Nahe, driving back the Austrians all along the line. This was followed by the occupation of Birkenfeld and the forcing of the terrible gorges of Oberstein, by which the grand road to

Trarbach was secured against the enemy. But the weather was most severe and the country rude and rugged. "What a country! what a situation!" writes Marceau to Jourdan, "he who has not seen either does not know how disagreeable war is. We can devise nothing for connecting the different corps, nor is there any certain means of communication." Later he writes from Birkenfeld: "All day it has been as cold as Hades is hot, and the soldiers have suffered infinitely. The hope of coming victory has alone enabled us to put up with all our inconveniences." His reconnaissances are fruitless, "so much snow has fallen and I have come back frozen."

All the columns of Jourdan suffered terribly during their difficult march to the Nahe. "The season was most severe," writes Jomini, "the roads broken up and impassable. A cruel scarcity prevailed. To add to other embarrassments, the rising of the waters of the Nahe rendered the construction of a flying bridge across that river, under the fire of the enemy, a much more difficult and almost impossible task."

Jourdan's object in thus advancing will be better understood from the following extract of a letter addressed by Marceau, before the passage of the Nahe, to Gouvain Saint-Cyr, who commanded at the time the left wing of Pichegru's Army of the Rhine: "The Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse," wrote Marceau from Birkenfeld, on the 29th November, "numbering more or less 40,000 men, will advance to-morrow to Kreuznach, Lauterecken, and Meisenheim. General Jourdan's aim is to try

and cut off the enemy's communication with Mayence, or, at least, to compel him to raise the siege of Mannheim, if, as I am assured, this place has not already fallen. He has communicated his project to General Pichegru, who, informed of the date of our movements, will no doubt himself make one to support us."

Marceau, having forced the passage of the Nahe at Kirn, now advanced to the Glann, where he occupied Meisenheim and Lauterecken, while Jourdan and Bernadotte drove the Austrians from Kreuznach. But the flooding of the Nahe prevented Jourdan from throwing bridges across it to enable his wings to advance, at the same time that Marceau, in attempting to gain the Alsenz, was assailed by the enemy with an overpowering force of cavalry, and not only driven back, but obliged to abandon Lauterecken, retaining, however, the gorges that command it.

Jourdan, far from losing heart, was now about to press the enemy by a bold and simultaneous advance, when the news of the capitulation of Mannheim reached him. This event had really taken place on the 22nd November, and in consequence Clerfayt was reinforced on the Nahe and the Glann by thirty-six battalions of infantry and several regiments of cavalry. Jourdan wisely resolved to retire before such formidable combinations, but his resolution was taken almost too late to prevent the destruction of his entire advance-guard under Marceau, who was still confronting the enemy on the Glann.

Clerfayt directed his right on Bingen, and his

*corps de bataille* on Kreuznach and Alsenz, while Kray was ordered to penetrate to Meisenheim and Nauendorf to Birkenfeld and Baumholder.

Already at the beginning of December, Marceau reports that the enemy is in force at Kaiserlautern and Wolfstein, and he is afraid of his communications in rear, as the hordes of the hostile cavalry are masters of all the great roads. On the 3rd December a skirmish takes place, followed by a severer one the next day; the enemy is soundly beaten on both occasions, and loses heavily around Alsenz, where the attack was concentrated. Marceau cannot yet see what the enemy's object is in making these frequent attacks; he reports certain suspicious movements the next day, and thinks the Austrians are manœuvring on his right so as to cut off his advance-guard. He gives orders accordingly to reconstruct the bridges of Standenheim and Sobernheim, so as to establish communications with Jourdan, and in order to secure his retreat to Birkenfeld in the event of his being hard pressed.

Their frequent reverses, added to their absolute destitution, had for some time broken the spirit of the Republican armies on the Rhine. Numbers deserted and returned to their homes, and no troops were sent to replace them or to fill up casualties. Discipline could no longer be maintained among those who remained, and pillage and outrage were the order of the day. The little Army of the Hunsrück, more and more hemmed in and menaced, was all the more affected by this in that its numbers were every day diminished by the almost hourly con-



flicts with a foe whose ranks were replenished in proportion to the Republican losses.

We find Marceau so dejected and disgusted with the state of affairs, that, as he said in his letter to Jourdan, nothing in the world would prevent him from quitting the army and his command were it not for his honour and his friendship for his chief. Never before had he been so deeply pained and affected by what took place around him, and, notwithstanding all his efforts, the shameless pillage by the soldiery, the indifference of the officers, the insubordination of both, and the absence of all arrangements for the supply of clothing, provisions, and ammunition.

In spite of this dejection of spirit, Marceau does not abate his efforts. He is all day, and often all night on horseback, he shows the enemy as bold a front as the circumstances and his numbers will permit, so disposing his troops as to deceive the enemy and mask his own weakness.

But the climax approaches. On the 7th December Marceau reports to Jourdan that the enemy has on that day made a reconnaissance along his entire front, though without attempting to come to close quarters, and that he has himself seen considerable reinforcements arrive to them at Lauterecken, and behind the stream of the Alsenz. He is anxious as to the result of an attack, as he occupies a bad position and his line is too extended.

The attack was delivered by the Austrians the very next day. Clerfayt had discovered the isolation and feebleness of Marceau's division. Early

on the morning of the 8th December the Republican advance-guard was repulsed, and its route to Kirn cut off, and Marceau, assailed on the Glann by the combined forces of Kray and Nauendorf, amounting to 26,000 men, effected his retreat across the Nahe at Sobernheim with difficulty, and with the loss of 900 men and three field guns.

The action is best described in the words of Marceau's report to Jourdan, written from Sobernheim on the night of his defeat: "Cut off from my advance-guard from 7 o'clock in the morning, my right overthrown as soon as it was, so to speak, attacked, I saw myself simultaneously assailed on my wings and in rear by 15,000 men. I continued to fight till 2 o'clock p.m., when I was forced to retire both by the frequency and the force of the several attacks of the enemy. I arrived behind Standernheim at 5 o'clock in the afternoon without a single cartridge, and without any ammunition for the greater portion of my artillery. I cannot yet say what my losses have been. . . . If anything could console an unfortunate general it would certainly be the conviction that he has done all that was necessary and possible to delay the march of events. There would also be the pleasure he has experienced of seeing his troops obedient to his orders, fighting with determination, and arresting at each step the progress of a superior foe."

Marceau had exposed himself freely during the whole day encouraging or leading his troops. His horse was killed under him, and on one occasion, being cut off from his troops, he was obliged to open

a passage for himself, sword in hand, through the enemy's hussars. Though compelled to retreat, his defence had been such as to make the Austrians more circumspect in their advance, thus giving time to Jourdan's army to retire undisturbed from the line of the Nahe.

The attack also served to show to Jourdan that the aim of the Austrians was to cut him off, by outflanking him on the right, from Treves and the Moselle. Seeing this, Jourdan fell back behind the Soonwald, and lined the left bank of the Moselle from Treves to Trarbach with Bernadotte's division ; at the same time, knowing that he could not hold out in this savage and devastated country, he prepared to retire himself behind the Moselle, and commenced the construction of an intrenched camp at Trarbach.

This was all the more necessary as Clerfayt was now threatening to cross the Lower Rhine at Coblenz and was pushing reconnaissances towards Mühlheim and Birkenfeld. In fact, the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse, inferior in numbers and wanting in everything, found itself in the most difficult position possible. Retreat was inevitable, but, in order that it might be carried out honourably and otherwise than disastrously, Jourdan ordered Marceau, with his own and Poncet's divisions, to attack the enemy once more and drive back the swarms of cavalry that menaced the right flank of his army.

Marceau surprised the enemy on the morning of the 17th December, in the villages of Sultzbach, Stips-

hausen, and Proschied, took 400 prisoners and three guns, drove the enemy back in great disorder to the banks of the Nahe, and compelled them to withdraw all their outposts from Rosbach and Mühlheim. Two or three days later the Austrians withdrew altogether from the roads and gorges leading into the Moselle valley, and left only some light troops on the left bank of the Nahe.

Marceau's victory gave the French the navigation of the Moselle and assured them the possession of Treves and Trarbach. But its results extended even further than this, for it led almost immediately to the conclusion of an armistice between the conflicting armies. In the negotiations Marceau played the part of intermediary for the French, while the Austrians were represented by Baron Kray, the general who had been opposed to him in the field.

Marceau had often had occasion to communicate with the Austrian generals Kray and Nauendorf, more especially as to the exchange and treatment of prisoners of war, and they had learned to respect a foe whom they found to be not only worthy of their steel but one whose humanity shone out clear above the stress of war and the rage and animosity of battle. "I am jealous of winning the esteem even of my enemies," wrote Marceau to Nauendorf, "and I shall neglect nothing to convince them that in everything I am worthy of them."

On the 19th December Kray wrote to Marceau asking for an interview with him at the outposts. The meeting took place on the following morning, when Kray for the first time proposed the armistice,

the terms of which, Jourdan having meanwhile authorized the negotiation, were discussed a few days later at a second meeting. The clauses regulating the truce were finally agreed upon between the generals at Kirn. All hostilities were forthwith suspended, and the signatures to the convention were formally exchanged on the first day of the year 1796.

The armies on the Upper Rhine, that is, the forces of Pichegru and Wurmser, were included in the armistice. The Simmern and the Nahe were fixed as the boundaries between Clerfayt, and Jourdan. Hostilities were not to be resumed until ten days after the denunciation of the truce by either side. A line of demarcation was drawn between the contending parties, and both armies went into winter quarters on the left bank of the Rhine.

This repose did not come a day too soon, for the army of the Sambre-and-Meuse was suffering cruelly from famine and disease and had already been reduced to the last expedients. By advancing boldly beyond the Nahe it had effected the purpose of the Directory. But in drawing the superior forces of Clerfayt on itself it had been severely handled and might have been annihilated, or at least cut off from the Moselle, but for the strategic skill of its generalissimo and the unhesitating valour of the young officer who commanded its advance-guard.

Jourdan, with Joubert and the other representatives, hailed with delight the prospect of a truce, and considered it to be the best as well as the most fortunate result of the victory of Sultzbach.

On the 15th December Joubert wrote to a colleague: "We are continually overreached by a numerous enemy, to whom we can present but an unequal front. . . . The evil increases from day to day, and, together with the uncertainty of our plans, adds considerably to the misfortunes of an army situated like that of the Sambre-and-Meuse."

Jourdan, in reporting the armistice to the Directory, wrote: "You will, I have no doubt, approve of the negotiation imposed on us by the hardships of our troops, their destitution, the absence of horses, and the necessity of placing ourselves in a condition to renew the campaign with advantage."

We cannot but agree with Jourdan and the representatives as to the happy results of Marceau's actions on the Glann and the Nahe, his victory at Sultzbach, and his clever conferences with Kray. His efforts both as diplomatist and general were crowned with complete success. But whatever the claim to distinction he may be allowed in either capacity, we are quite certain, from a scrutiny of all that bears on the transactions in which he was engaged, that Marceau was guided, principally if not wholly, by the dictates of humanity and by the strong desire to bring to a close a cruel system of warfare, in which he was compelled to take a leading though an unwilling part.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Marceau's occupations during the truce—Preparations for marriage—The armistice denounced—Marceau is placed in command of the right wing—His several tasks during the advance of the French armies—His attitude towards the people—Retreat of Jourdan and junction of the right wing with the main army on the Lahn.*

THE armistice that had brought to a temporary close the sanguinary conflicts on the Rhine, the Moselle, and the Nahe, and put an end to the awful sufferings of the troops, was disapproved of by both governments. The Aulic Council of the Empire disgraced Clerfayt, while Jourdan and Joubert were both summoned to Paris to justify themselves before the Directory, Kléber being left in command of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse.

The truce lasted five months notwithstanding, during which Marceau, with his headquarters at Treves, busied himself with the civil administration of the country, and at the same time prepared his division for the coming struggle.

The Directory, zealous as a new government, meditated important projects, and sought to place its armies on a better footing. Its object was to

push these forward into Germany by the valleys of the Maine and Neckar, and, by transferring the theatre of war to the hereditary dominions of Austria, to alienate the Confederate princes from the Empire.

In the campaign of 1795 the most fortunate circumstances had combined to favour the French, but the stupid instructions of the Committee of Public Safety, and the treason of Pichegru, had prevented their profiting by them. As no shadow of doubt could be cast on the patriotism of Jourdan, that general returned to his command, but Pichegru was replaced by Moreau. The Directory saw the necessity of re-organizing its armies, and large numbers of fresh troops were sent to the Rhine from western and southern France. But the Executive overlooked the question of supplies, and of transport and cavalry remounts, without which the mere addition to the numerical strength of the armies, occupying an exhausted country, was a doubtful advantage. Added to this that Carnot, elected member of the Directory, resumed the conduct of the war, and prepared a vicious plan of campaign, in the execution of which the two armies on the Rhine all but perished.

The Aulic Council, on the other hand, though it replaced Clerfayt by Prince Charles, took no active steps, and gave time to the Republicans to recover from their shattered condition and to regain their courage, shaken by the defeats of the previous year. On the whole, the opposing armies on the Rhine commenced the campaign of 1796 with equal ad-



vantages, and it was only the great military genius of the Archduke Charles that outweighed the balance, and brought victory to the Imperial arms in the end.

Meanwhile, until the truce was denounced, the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse prepared itself for the coming fray. Jourdan guarded the Hundsrück and the left bank of the Nahe with the divisions of Marceau, Poncet, Bernadotte, and Championnet, and Bonnard's reserve of cavalry. Works had been commenced on the Moselle to cover the bridges of Mühlheim, Trarbach, Treis, and Alken, and the heights of Trarbach and Treves had been intrenched. The execution of the greater portion of these works was entrusted to Marceau, who made a systematic study of the defence of the Moselle. In addition, he had to attend to the remounting of his cavalry, and to the equipment and armament of his troops generally. He established, as officer commanding the advance-guard, a line of cantonments, which served as a thick screen to prevent the enemy from gaining any intelligence of his preparations, or defences, and organized an intelligence corps to penetrate the enemy's camp, and keep him informed of all their designs and movements. Hating red tape, as all capable active-minded men must hate it, he yet submitted to its rule, and applied the orders of the Minister of War with the utmost rigour and precision of detail.

The armistice was fully approved of by the Directory after it had learnt, from the mouths of Jourdan and Joubert, the miserable plight of its

armies. The convention not being, however, quite complete, Marceau was directed to see Kray again. The generals met twice at Birkenfeld, and it was during these and the previous interviews that the older general learnt to respect the sagacity and admire the patriotism of the younger, and to love him for the great qualities he found in his character. Marceau carried the further negotiations to a successful issue, the principal clause added to the truce being the stipulation that ten days' notice should be given by either belligerent before resuming hostilities.

Marceau had something pleasanter, during this period, to occupy him at Treves than the preparation for a war of which he sincerely desired to see the end. His sister, Emira, had visited him last, as we know, at Coblenz. Since that time she had, in all her letters, never ceased to dissuade him from the projected alliance with the aristocratic house of Châteaugiron. She now renewed her visits at Treves, where the subject was again discussed, and Emira might, perhaps, have succeeded in shaking her brother's purpose, had not his friend Kléber, who was assured of the sentiments of both Madame Leprêtre and her daughter, stepped in to revive fresh hopes in Marceau's breast. He persuaded him to wait until Agathe had attained her twenty-first year, when she would be free to assume her husband's name, and to prove her devotion to him. Marceau at first concealed his newly-awakened hopes from his sister, but all was finally revealed, and she withdrew her opposition. Sergeant (Emira's husband) records that all the details for the mar-

riage were arranged about this time. The Executive, he says, had promised Marceau leave to visit Paris, the ceremony was to have taken place at Argenteuil, and it was only the sudden renewal of hostilities that postponed what Marceau's death for ever made impossible.

Agathe knew of Emira's objection to the marriage, and after Marceau's death wrote to her a pathetic letter on the subject. "You do not know me, madame," she half complains, "and, therefore, you are unable to judge of the feelings that drew me towards him." She speaks of Marceau as the "friend of my heart," and goes on to say how she had followed his career step by step, glorying in his deeds, but anxious only for the day when her hero would return to her and claim her. And so we must work up the tragedy to its end. "While the rose-crowned torches of Hymen," writes Sergent, "are being made ready in France, the mortal remains of Marceau are brought back to the banks of the Rhine to the accompaniment of funeral march and dirge."

The Aulic Council, alarmed at the success of Napoleon in Italy, and in order to create a diversion on the Rhine, at last denounced the armistice. In a letter to Kray, acknowledging the receipt of despatches relating to this rupture, Marceau thus expresses himself on the subject: "It grieves me as deeply as it does you that the governments we serve have remitted to the fortune of arms the decision of their respective claims, as to the validity of which I am no judge. I groan for humanity

when I think of the evils which follow the flail of war, and I shall never cease to hope for a speedy peace, when two nations, meant for mutual esteem, will be reconciled." Alas, for humanity! the year 1796 was to inaugurate the era of Napoleon, the flail of all Europe, and the most terrible citizen that ever scourged a state. The truce was denounced on the 21st May, and ten days later the fifth campaign of liberty was opened.

Carnot's vicious plan involved a repetition of last year's blunders. The two Republican armies were to advance in parallel lines into Germany, the one along the valley of the Maine, the other along that of the Neckar, and to attack the flanks of the Imperial army. This army occupied a central position, and could at any time concentrate to overwhelm either Jourdan or Moreau, and this is what actually happened before the close of the year.

The Austrian army, 150,000 strong, after the departure of Wurmser, had their centre at Mayence. On the left Latour observed the Upper Rhine, with his back to the Black Forest, and Prince Wurtemberg, on the right, the Lower Rhine as far as its tributary, the Sieg. At the moment of the rupture of the armistice the bulk of the army of the Lower Rhine, under the archduke himself, was encamped before Mayence near Baumholder, and Mercandin was detached with a considerable corps to the neighbourhood of Kreuznach to cover its left and rear. The strength of the French armies, including garrisons, exceeded 152,000, of which Jourdan commanded about one half, his right wing (subsequently

under Marceau) resting on the Nahe, and his left, under Kléber, on the Rhine as far as Düsseldorf.

Marceau did not take part in the advance of the armies to the Danube. He was selected to guard the line of the Rhine, to maintain touch between the two armies, and to prevent any movements in their rear. His task was therefore none the less a difficult and dangerous one, especially as the forces placed at his disposal were always inadequate, and, until the retreat of the archduke, he was liable to be crushed by a sudden concentration of the enemy, when neither Jourdan nor Moreau could have saved him.

Jourdan, as we have seen, guarded the approaches to the Hunsrück, observing the archduke with four divisions, including Marceau's. It was a part of Carnot's plan that Jourdan should cross the Rhine at Neuwied and Düsseldorf to attract to himself the principal attention of the enemy, and so facilitate the passage of the Upper Rhine by Moreau. He was also instructed to organize his right wing into a separate corps, to defend the position on the Nahe, and maintain touch with Moreau. The corps, when organized, consisted of the divisions of Marceau, Poncet, and Bernadotte, with Bonnard's cavalry, making up a total of 29,950 men. It was placed under the command of Marceau. It was intended that it should act, for the present, merely as a corps of observation, cover the bridge of Neuwied, watch Mayence, and support when required the operations of either army.

Hostilities were resumed on the 31st May, a day of advance-posts and reconnaissances in force on the Nahe and the Blies, to feel the enemy and unmask his movements. At the very outset the Austrians tried to cut Marceau off from Jourdan on his left, and Saint-Cyr on his right. But he boldly assumed the offensive, and inflicted rude lessons on the enemy. Everywhere he was successful, on the heights around Birkenfeld, on the Blies, and on the Seltz, and Joubert had nothing but praise for the young general in all his reports.

The state of his troops was, however, far from satisfactory. On the 1st June he wrote to Jourdan, complaining he was without supplies, and that four battalions had had no bread for two days. "I would rather," he indignantly writes, "live in obscurity, than be compelled to see the fruit of five years' labour, and of an unflinching desire to do the utmost for my country thrown away, because of the mismanagement of the administration." So great was the neglect of this department, that we find him obliged to levy a contribution of four loaves of bread from each of the inhabitants of Treves and Saarburg.

Marceau was soon, however, to be relieved of the pressure of overwhelming forces. On the 31st May Kléber left the camp at Düsseldorf and advanced to the Sieg, where he defeated Wurtemberg, and again on the heights of Altenkirchen. Prince Charles, hearing of the defeat of his right wing, hastened to its aid with reinforcements. He withdrew from the Nahe on the 8th June, leaving only

20,000 men in Mayence, and a screen before Marceau and Saint-Cyr. Jourdan, on his part, hearing of the departure of his adversary, crossed the Rhine hastily at Neuwied, and marched across the mountains of Fulden on Wetzler to take up a position on the Lahn. Marceau was left with 20,000 men to observe the camp of Mercandin and the garrison of Mayence.

Although left without orders by Jourdan, and kept in the dark as to the movements of Moreau, Marceau did all that the circumstances permitted. He occupied Kreuznach and made a strong reconnaissance along the Seltz. Of his position in advance of Kreuznach he writes : " I am every day on horseback, and, heavens knows ! long enough at a stretch, too ! When is this going to end, and when, if at all, do these gentlemen intend bringing matters to an issue by a great and glorious battle ? "

His exertions were destined to be fruitless of result, for on the 15th June the archduke defeated Jourdan at Wetzler, and on the following day the entire army of the Sambre-and-Meuse was in full retreat. Marceau soon felt once more the pressure of the Imperial troops ; the enemy is reinforced and becomes more and more audacious, but he still shows a bold front, and purposes, if attacked, to risk the chances of a battle on the banks of the Nahe. To Jourdan he writes, at this time, words of sympathy and advice, and the only complaint he has to make is against the conduct of the peasants, who, he says, constantly betray his sol-

diers, and lead them by false reports into ambushes and surprises.

Jourdan was now compelled to fall back to his first position behind the Rhine. On the 19th June Kléber sustained an unequal action at Ukerath, and on the following day the entire army was once more behind the line of the great river.

The Imperialists, having successfully opposed Jourdan on their right flank, now renewed their manœuvres on the Nahe. On the arrival of reinforcements an attempt was made to force Marceau's line on the Seltz. The attempt was frustrated, and the enemy was content with constructing intrenched camps facing Marceau's, in order to prevent his further advance.

Marceau's position had once more become a precarious one, and he was ill at ease, especially as Moreau had withdrawn all his troops from his neighbourhood. At this juncture he had to complain, too, of the misconduct of some of his officers, especially of those of the 4th Regiment of Hussars, who had allowed themselves to be surprised. "Neither reprimands," he writes to Jourdan, "nor the frequent exercise of authority has any effect on their habits. All they can think of is drink and sleep. I say this with regret, and, though there can be no pleasure in inflicting punishment, yet I shall not be able to put up with it any longer if these men are not expelled from our midst, and an example made of those who disgrace us daily. I would rather vegetate in some quiet hamlet with my pure intentions and clear conscience, than be



compelled to submit to, and to suffer for the incapacity and bad faith of men for whom duty is a chimera and honour a meaningless word."

Towards the people of the country he maintained the same attitude of forbearance and humanity. On the renewal of hostilities he had advanced his headquarters to Birkenfeld, and thence to Kreuznach. He was obliged to levy contributions, but he spared this town. "The town of Kreuznach," he wrote to Jourdan, "has suffered so much that I have not dared to levy any imposition on it."

The horizon, however, soon cleared. On the 24th June Moreau effected his celebrated passage of the Rhine at Strasbourg. Two days later the news reached Marceau, who transmitted it to Jourdan. In the same letter, such was the goodness of his heart, he says a good word for the commandant of hussars whom he had suspended, because, as he says, he is an old soldier, and has long served his country. "We need young men, full of honour, to put the machine in motion again."

During his severe vigil on the banks of the Nahe and the Seltz, Marceau was attacked by a cruel malady contracted in La Vendée. He was obliged to keep to his bed, but his vigilance never ceased, and he issued orders and maintained discipline as before. On the 30th June, and again on the 1st July, the enemy attacked his position in considerable force, but retreated each day towards Mayence, after engaging him for a few hours. It became clear to him that his foes were drawing

closer round Mayence, and thence crossing the river and passing to the Upper Rhine, where Moreau had been disturbing the Imperial left wing. Prince Charles had, in fact, already quitted the centre with 25,000 men to assist Latour, but there were still 36,000 troops on the Lahn and 27,000 before Mayence.

The Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse retired behind the Rhine, was only awaiting the news of Moreau's crossing to resume the offensive. Accordingly, on the 27th June, Kléber once more advanced to the Sieg, and on the 2nd July Jourdan himself, after drawing on Marceau for reinforcements, recrossed the Rhine at Neuwied.

We do not purpose to follow either Jourdan or Moreau in their bold march into the heart of Germany. We are concerned only with the right wing of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse under Marceau, to whom a number of duties was assigned, varying with the advance of the armies. The corps left on the Rhine under his orders numbered 28,550 men, consisting of the brigades of Hardy and Daurier, and the divisions of Bonnaud and Poncet. To Poncet was entrusted the investment of Ehrenbreitstein, whose garrison would have intercepted the communications and destroyed the bridge of Neuwied. Poncet was ordered to draw his forces closely round the fortress, and to watch over the safety of the bridge with its covering redoubts, and the depôts of war material established at Montabauer and Limburg. Besides Ehrenbreitstein, Marceau had to lay siege to the fortress of

Königstein, to hold in check on both banks of the river the Imperial troops shut up in Mayence, to blockade Cassel, to garrison Frankfurt, and escort all convoys from the Lahn to the Maine, and from thence up to Wurzburg. He was responsible also for the civil administration of the country, and for the levying of the contributions of war decided upon by the so-called representatives of the people. He placed Hardy before Mayence on the left bank of the Rhine, Daurier opposite Cassel, while Bonnaud's division took charge of Frankfurt and the country between the Maine and the Rhine. Marceau's activity everywhere supplied the place of numbers. "Vigilance and supervision," he wrote to Brigadier-General Frant, "will protect us from everything." These are his watchwords and his means of success.

He was, however, not well pleased with his part in the campaign, and would rather have accompanied Jourdan. "I long to join you," he wrote, "if only to be rid of these administrators, collectors, bailiffs *et hoc genus omne*, who beset me here. . . . Heavens, what a brood! and how it does increase and multiply!" One of this brood was the national agent, Dreyesen. How Marceau dealt with him and his pretensions the following extract will tell: "I do not know, citizen, to what I owe this long and pompous display of your rights, or this assertion of your independence. As I have never had any dealings with you, and have not even the pleasure of your acquaintance, you have, it seems, nothing to complain of against me. Whenever it is a question

of the service of the Republic, you may be sure I shall not be behindhand in the discharge of my duty. As for yourself, if you will only act as you ought to do, you will find no difficulty in winning the esteem of all Republicans, and you will never have to fear that your authority is being ignored or opposed by the military."

Certainly, under a general less zealous, a body of troops so out of proportion to the numbers of the enemy, and to the requirements of the task assigned to it, would soon have found itself in inextricable difficulties. But Marceau's wise dispositions, as well as his activity, made up for numbers. Everywhere fieldworks were constructed, a bridge of boats thrown across the river at Russelsheim, and all the material for river transport collected on the Rhine near Winckel, so as to facilitate the communications between the different portions of his corps of observation.

The garrisons of Ehrenbreitstein, Mayence, Cassel, and Königstein, allowed themselves to be invested with a facility quite unexpected. As for Königstein, the French engineers, having discovered the pipes by which water was supplied to that fortress, at once cut off the supply, and compelled the garrison to surrender at discretion. Marceau entered the place at the head of his troops on the 20th July, and was rewarded with the capture of twenty cannon and a considerable store of small arms and ammunition.

On the 16th July the city of Frankfurt was surrendered to Jourdan. It was as leniently dealt

with as the Directory would allow, and Marceau was enjoined to collect the contributions. He showed great moderation towards the magistrates taken as hostages in allowing them their liberty and some grace in the payment of their security money.

For this act of humanity he was denounced to the Minister of War by the politicians who were with his army, and he was very nearly being deprived of his command and recalled to Paris.

In the summer of this year, Marceau's corps occupied the whole of the Nassau-Usingen district, and on the 21st July we find him established at Wiesbaden. Here, again, we read of the same attitude towards the unhappy people whose country was being devastated by war. The archives of Wiesbaden contain several proofs of his policy,—if we can call that so which proceeds unprompted and unpremeditated from the heart,—of humanity and moderation. Later in the year the German people complained of the abuses and requisitions of the French commissaries of war. On the President of the Regency, Von Kruse, forwarding these complaints to Marceau, the latter at once authorized the issuing of a proclamation which would deliver the country from the exactions complained of. On the 17th August, to cite another instance, Marceau had occasion to write to Jourdan, forwarding to him the plenipotentiaries from the Prince of Nassau for the conclusion of an armistice and a treaty of peace. He urges on Jourdan to negotiate with the prince, and win over one more friend to the Republic from

among her enemies, and he drives his argument home in words full of compassion and generous large-heartedness: "If it were not within your well-known principles to wish for all nations a peace that would enable them to enjoy their own, and were you not already acquainted with the trials of the peasant, on whom falls the burden of war, I would paint a picture for you of what this country has suffered from the continuous incursions of the rival armies. The people sigh only for peace, and are ready to sacrifice all to obtain it. I cannot conceal from you that the country is exhausted, and that nothing but a little corn can now be obtained from it. My dear general, take this as your guide for the contribution that you might exact. Having witnessed the misery of these poor people, and knowing their eagerness to supply the wants of the troops, I am allowed to plead their cause, which is that of humanity, and will find an echo in your heart as it has already in mine."

Towards the end of August the Regency again complained, this time against the French Inspector-General of Forests and Game Reserves. Marceau promptly issued an order placing a limit on this official's rapacity and powers, and making the exercise even of his admitted rights subject to the supervision of the general in command of the district.

The man, who was so careful of the property of others, and might at this time have enriched himself, was poor, and remained so to the end of his days. In June, Marceau wrote to Emira to say that in case he had an arm or a leg the less, she

alone must support him. At another time he could scarcely collect twenty-five louis to send to his mother, who had been robbed. On the 1st August he wrote to Commissary Robert :

“I am quite ruined. There remain to me my cloak and sword, honour, and life. The latter, upon my word, becomes a burden when it no longer holds out any prospect of happiness. I leave it to time, the master of all things, to improve my lot.”

Marceau's troops, once firmly established in intrenched positions, had only skirmishes with the several Austrian garrisons they hemmed in. That of Mayence alone executed two sorties of at all a serious nature, and these were repulsed by the French after the enemy had obtained a partial success. The garrison of Ehrenbreitstein was summoned by Marceau, but it refused to yield to his terms. Dispositions were therefore made to lay regular siege to the place, but the works were not far advanced when Jourdan began his retreat, and it was only after this had commenced that the Government consigned some of the troops of the Army of the North to assist in the blockade of the fortress, as well as that of Mayence. This assistance arrived too late to be of much service to Jourdan or Marceau.

The Archduke Charles had gradually retired towards Ratisbon before the armies of Jourdan and Moreau, drawing these further away from their base, and lengthening their line of communications at every step. By the middle of August Jourdan had reached the Naab, and Moreau had already de-

bouched into the Danube valley. But the archduke was only waiting his opportunity. That opportunity came after the battle of Neresheim. Leaving a screen of 37,000 men before Moreau, he took his departure on the 16th August with twenty-four battalions and fifty squadrons to crush Jourdan, now beyond the reach of any timely assistance from Moreau. Jourdan was defeated, his route to Nuremberg intercepted, and his army only reached Velden at the end of August, after a disastrous retreat of eight days. Arrived at Schweinfurt, he was anxious to hazard a battle before finally retreating beyond the Rhine, and the Directory left him no choice when it ordered him to maintain his ground in Franconia at any cost, so as not to uncover Moreau, now advancing to the gates of Munich.

The great battle, on which depended the fate of the two Republican armies, was fought at Wurzburg on the 3rd September. The Archduke Charles was completely victorious, and Jourdan had to fall back on the Lahn, where Marceau, after abandoning the investment of all the fortresses, amalgamated his forces once more with those of his commander-in-chief.

So long as the French had been victorious, and had continued their onward march, their communications had remained open. From the day, however, that they began to fall back the inhabitants of Franconia took up arms, assailed the escorts, pillaged the convoys, and intercepted the routes. Marceau was completely cut off from Jourdan. In vain, after the battle of Wurzburg, did the latter try



to inform the former that he must raise the blockade of Mayence and regain the Lahn with all available forces. None of the despatch bearers reached their destination, and Marceau continued to hold his positions some time after the main army reached the Upper Lahn.

On the 6th September a small column that Marceau had sent out to clear the forest of Spessart, infested with armed peasants and deserters, fell unexpectedly on Prince Charles's advance-guard at Bembach. A warm engagement followed, in which the French troops experienced heavy losses, and were almost cut to pieces. It was now that Marceau believed the reports brought to him from time to time by fugitives; he only now realized that the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse had been beaten, and was in full retreat.

Marceau's situation became once more one of extreme danger. The archduke was master of the communications between Wurzburg and Frankfurt, and could compel Marceau to raise the blockade of Mayence, and prevent him from joining the main army. Jourdan was well aware of this, and hence his anxiety to communicate with his right wing.

But Marceau was not slow in realizing the situation, and probably saved by his prompt action both Jourdan's army and his own corps from disaster. He at once destroyed the bridge at Russelsheim, recalled the troops of Bonnaud, and ordered Hatry to retire behind the Nahe. On the 8th September he re-united the divisions of Bonnet (who had replaced Bonnaud) and Daurier, 12,000 strong, on the

plateau of Dotzheim, near Wiesbaden, and began his march to the Lahn, Poncet's division still continuing to lay siege to Ehrenbreitstein. The next day the garrison of Mayence tried to disturb the retreat, but was repulsed after a short but severe engagement, in which, according to the archduke's memoirs, the French lost two guns. Marceau's troops marched in three columns, arriving on the 10th September at Nassau, Dietz, and Limburg respectively. The junction with the main army, which had crossed the Lahn on the 9th, was effected the same day.

Under the tardy orders of the Directory Beurnonville had directed a corps of 6,000 men of his Army of the North on Ehrenbreitstein to relieve the troops of Poncet, and to commence the regular siege of that fortress. This corps, under the orders of Castilverd, reached its destination on the 10th September, in time only to take part in the general defence of the Lahn, behind which Jourdan had determined to offer a stubborn resistance.

On the 11th Jourdan and Marceau met at Limburg, and organized the defence of the Lower Lahn, which was entrusted to Marceau. Two and a half brigades of infantry, and 100 horse of Marceau's troops were detached to relieve the division of the Army of the North before Ehrenbreitstein, while another half-brigade passed to Bernadotte's division on Marceau's right. The four remaining brigades formed a division under Poncet. This division occupied Dietz, that under Castilverd Nassau and the river to its junction with the Rhine ; they con-

stituted the right wing, and were placed under Marceau.

The French line stretched from Giessen to the Rhine. The united Republican forces on the Lahn exceeded 50,000, but the cavalry arm was proportionately weak, and the artillery was deficient in ammunition and means of transport, while the army generally was suffering from want of food and from neglect. It was impossible for Jourdan to take the offensive. He had already sent one of his staff to Paris to tender his resignation ; receiving no reply, he had resolved to keep meanwhile on the defensive, without, however, letting his adversary know of his resolution. The greater portion of his forces was concentrated towards Wetzlar. It was very necessary, however, to guard Limburg, the other great approach to his position and nearest to his line of retreat. Bernadotte and Bonnaud were ordered to establish themselves here. They occupied the heights of Offheim, their right resting on Marceau and their left on the village of Runkel. Further up the Lahn, Championnet's division crowned the heights of Altenberg behind Wetzlar, where Jourdan had fixed his headquarters, and Klein, with a strong force occupied Weilburg, both to defend this outlet and to support Bernadotte. Lefebvre, with the advance-guard, was posted on the left bank of the Lahn and on the heights in front of Wetzlar, while Grenier's division defended Giessen and the extreme left of the line.

Marceau's *corps de bataille* occupied, as we have seen Dietz (Poncet) and Nassau (Castelverd) ; he

had also a strong line of outposts in advance of these towns on the left bank of the Lahn and on the heights of Minsfelden.

The position was an extended one, but a defensive attitude did not allow of any contraction. It will be seen that had Jourdan made no change in his first dispositions, he would have been able to repulse the attacks of the archduke at all points.

The archduke entered Frankfurt on the 8th September, and thence advanced his troops in three columns towards the Lahn, the right against Giessen and Wetzlar, the centre, under Hotze, upon Limburg, and the left towards the Lower Lahn.

On the 11th, Marceau wrote the following letter to Castilverd, a letter which has become historic, and must be borne in mind when we come to consider the events of the 16th and 17th September :

“You will take up a position with your six battalions on the heights before Nassau. . . . You will retire to the right bank of the Lahn the moment you see the enemy is superior to you. After placing your troops in position on the heights of Hinterlahnstein and Nassau, you will defend the two approaches with the utmost obstinacy, and you must not think of retreating until your position has been completely forced, or until you have received the order to do so.”

On the day this letter was despatched Marceau and Bernadotte had met and prepared together

a combined defence of Limburg and Dietz. Marceau's intimacy with the future King of Sweden had been of long standing, there was mutual admiration and esteem, and the story of their quarrel when Bernadotte's division was temporarily placed under his friend's orders is pure fiction. The last efforts made by Bernadotte to save Marceau's troops in their retreat on Altenkirchen would alone suffice to dispel the idle inferences of the newsmongers of the day on the subject.

The archduke had resolved not to allow the French army to establish itself firmly in its new positions, whence it could debouch again into the Maine valley. His plan was to feign to pass the Lahn at Wetzlar, but on arrival at Friedberg to change direction and come to Limburg and there force decisively the French line. This plan he now proceeded to carry into execution and to compel, by its success, the French army to quit the Lahn and recross the Rhine.

On the 11th September Kray's light troops attacked Grenier's outposts and occupied Giessen. By this Lefebvre was induced to commence a general action, and his report had the effect of bringing Jourdan back to Wetzlar and of reinforcing his left at the expense of his right. On the following day Marceau and Bernadotte made a combined reconnaissance, without, however, discovering the archduke's whereabouts. Jourdan had heard on this day, the 12th, that the archduke with his *corps de bataille* was at Friedberg. This confirmed him in his opinion that the enemy's main attack

would be directed against Wetzlar or Giessen, and induced him to withdraw Lefebvre to the right bank of the Lahn and abandon Wetzlar to the Austrians.

On the morning of the 13th September, Marceau wrote the following brief note to Hardy, beyond the Nahe: "The army is in position on the Lahn. I command two of its divisions. We are expecting a battle. *We shall enter upon it fully determined to conquer or to make the enemy pay dear for victory.* Do the same if you are attacked. With the troops you command the enemy need never be feared."

A general who enters into action with such resolutions cannot fail to communicate some of his spirit to his troops, and to wrest a victory from even a superior and determined enemy. Marceau had not long to wait, for, on this day, while Klein sustained a vigorous action at Weilburg, the archduke operated his junction with Hotze at Mottau, and at once made a strong reconnaissance of the French position from Runkel downwards. Marceau's advance-guard was attacked at Minsfelden, it held its ground tenaciously and gave time to Bonnaud and Bernadotte to march to its succour. Marceau took command of the fresh squadrons on their arrival, and immediately attacked the archduke's advance-guard. He led the charges in person, and compelled the Imperialists to retire beyond Kirberg which he occupied, further pursuit being prevented by the arrival of Neu's division.

Jourdan, ignorant of what was going on before

Limburg, and fully persuaded that Prince Charles was still at Friedberg, now made a very grave error. In his report to the Directory he says he intends to make the most obstinate resistance on the Lahn, and to resume the offensive as soon as he has remounted his shattered artillery. He thinks he has learnt that the enemy are going to overwhelm his left ; he purposes, therefore, to concentrate the bulk of his army in that direction. Jourdan thus proceeded to pass troops from his right to his left. While his right was menaced by the principal forces of the enemy, he ordered Bonnaud to quit the environs of Limburg for Hasslar, and Bernadotte to abandon the heights of Offheim and approach Weilburg, and relieve Championnet who was to concentrate his division behind Wetzlar.

On the 14th September, the Archduke Charles, who had by this time entirely effected his junction with Hotze, made another attack on Marceau and Bernadotte, the latter not yet having withdrawn to Weilburg. On the eve of this day Marceau wrote to Jourdan informing him that he and Bernadotte had been vigorously attacked by the enemy who had tried to force the fords of Villemar but were driven back behind the heights of Runkel and had likewise been defeated on the right. "We made a charge which was most successful. The enemy, though at that moment superior to us in numbers, retreated in the greatest disorder." He then goes on to warn Jourdan that the Archduke Charles is before him, and troops are filing past in great numbers to the right of the French position.

*"It will be in this direction that the greatest efforts will be made."* He adds that he expects a battle to-morrow and suggests reinforcements.

The news of what had taken place at Limburg on the 14th reached Jourdan the same day. In spite of the assurances of the two generals that they had the archduke before them, he persisted in his error. Bernadotte's troops were withdrawn, and there now remained before Dietz and Limburg but the division of Poncet, 6,000 strong, to cope with the main attack of the Imperialists directed by the archduke in person.

On the 15th, after Bernadotte had left, and Marceau had made a new disposition of his forces, the light troops of the archduke made a fresh reconnaissance. Marceau went out to meet them and drove them back on to Nieder-Brechen. His position on the eve of the 16th September was as follows: Castilverd's division defended the Lahn from its embouchure to Holtzappel, five battalions of Poncet's division were posted around Dietz, while the remaining seven battalions guarded Limburg and carried on the line to Runkel. Marceau had only 900 cavalry, these he placed in reserve. It was in this position, and with these numbers, that he awaited the archduke's attack.

It has been mentioned that Jourdan, disgusted at the unjust accusations brought against him, had already twice proffered his resignation to the Directory. Instead of accepting it, that body offered to transfer him to the Army of the North, then commanded by Beurnonville, who should take his



place. At dawn of the great day of the 16th September, Marceau, profoundly affected by the treatment meted out to Jourdan, and himself a prey to vague feelings of sadness and despondency, sat down and wrote to his general the following letter, which not only illustrates his outspoken sympathy, but shows in what a sublime spirit he went forth to do his duty on that day :

“The change in the command of the army,” he writes, “now makes an additional reason why I wish to return to my division. I ask you to grant me this favour as a proof of your friendship. I am not in the habit of boasting about my achievements, nor do I pursue any vain phantom of glory. To do my duty was always the height of my ambition. I owe it to myself therefore to seek at this moment what suits me best, and to give up a command which I only assumed in the hope of being useful to you and to the public service, but which I wish to retain only so long as the army is under your direction. I have heard with twofold pain both of your leaving the army and of the new command you are accepting. It is my opinion that after Jourdan has during three years led, from victory to victory, the army that he himself formed, he should not, because of a few reverses, leave us, and thus afford to the evil-minded the means of tarnishing his glory. I would far rather have seen you return to the bosom of your family, there to enjoy the repose you have earned and the regard you have already merited. You will forgive me my opinion on this subject; it is dictated, as you know, by the friendship I bear you. I can-



## CHAPTER VII.

*The defence of the Lower Lahn—Limburg—Castelverder's untimely retreat—Marceau gives time to Jourdan's army—In the Forest of Höchstebach—The end—Portrait of Marceau—Obsequies—Subsequent cremation at Coblenz.*

ON the morning of the 16th September Kray made a second and more determined attack on Jourdan's left wing. It was only intended as a demonstration in force, and though the Austrians were repulsed after a great battle and obliged to retreat across the Lahn to Giessen, Kray had gained his object, which was to confirm Jourdan in the belief that the main attack would be delivered there. Meanwhile Prince Charles, who had learnt that the French had withdrawn their principal forces from Dietz and Limburg, united his forces against those very points. Marceau's advance-guard at Minsfelden was attacked at dawn, and driven back at 9 a.m. into the town. The column directed against Dietz gained possession of that town in the afternoon after an obstinate struggle. Bonnet, who defended it, retired to the heights behind, and took up a position commanding the routes to Montabauer and Nassau, where he could maintain himself and prevent the enemy from issuing from Dietz.

The principal attack of the Austrians was directed against Limburg, where Marceau commanded in person. After his advance-posts had been driven in, he met the enemy in the plain and on the heights before the town, and only retired into Limburg after a series of brilliant cavalry charges led in person against the hordes of horsemen covering the enemy's front. The enemy, however, gained the heights overlooking the town on the left bank of the Lahn, it became impossible to hold it any longer, and the Austrians entered it almost without a struggle. But the passage of the river was obstinately defended. Under the concentrated fire of several heavy batteries placed on the left bank, the enemy gained the bridges over the river and the suburbs on the right bank. The battle concentrated itself around these. Marceau placed his artillery so as to enfilade the defile of Limburg, and, having just received three battalions of infantry and some guns from Bernadotte, he placed himself at the head of his troops, drove the enemy into the Lahn at the point of the bayonet and recaptured the suburbs, together with the main bridge.

The archduke ordered fresh troops to the front. The Austrians, protected by new batteries placed on the opposing heights, repassed the river. Marceau bore down on them a second time, and again hurled them back beyond the bridge. A third time they advanced and made themselves masters of the suburbs, their artillery making frightful havoc among the Republicans. The intrepid Marceau

was determined, however, not to allow this important outlet to pass into the hands of the enemy. It was now 5 o'clock, p.m., and he wrote with a feverish hand to Jourdan from the battle-field: "The bridge of Dietz has just been forced. I have given orders for a renewal of the attack, and that an attempt be made to recapture it. If successful I hope to hold out till nightfall both there and here at Limburg, otherwise I shall have to retreat." He begs for succour in the presence of an overwhelming foe. "I assure you," he continues, "that no engagement could have been more lively. Most of my soldiers have already been led three times to the charge. It is now 5 o'clock, and since 9 a.m. the enemy's fire has never slackened. Half my artillery is dismounted. I have not counted our losses, for, as I told you, I intended to hold out at all costs."

The attack was renewed for the third time, and, when night fell, the river passages and the suburbs of Limburg remained in the hands of Marceau and his brave troops. He had exposed himself to the utmost, his plume had been carried away by a shell, and again and again he had escaped death as if by a miracle.

After the victory he once more wrote to Jourdan: "We are still masters of the *tête de pont* of Limburg. . . . The enemy, after an engagement of ten hours, has not gained an inch of ground." He has to admit that the Austrians have been more successful at Dietz, but he points out that Bonnet has taken up a strong defensible position, covering all

the lines of retreat in that direction. With the aid of the half-brigade Bernadotte is sending, he hopes to regain the Dietz approaches, and though the enemy is infinitely superior to him, especially in artillery, he is determined to hold the passage of the Lahn to the last extremity.

A second letter was despatched the same evening : " It is night, my general, and I still write to you from the field of battle. The enemy has three times forced the Limburg outlets, and three times he has been repulsed with great valour. His superiority has availed him nothing against the courage of our soldiers. . . . The Imperialists are masters of the heights before Dietz. They have thus an opening, but it is a very small one. . . . Four battalions more, six or eight squadrons, and a company of light artillery, and I undertake to continue the fight all day to-morrow. . . . Although I love to follow the path of duty, I wish to assure you that my friendship for you has had a great deal to do with to-day's obstinate defence. . . . I repeat once more, few affairs have been so warm. I do not know exactly my losses, but those of the enemy have been heavy. You could have made a breast-work of their bodies on the bridge."

Jourdan's eyes must now have been opened. Kray's attack, that he had hastened to withstand on his left, together with Marceau's despatches, must have convinced him that he had before him only a strong advance-guard, and that the arch-duke's *point de mire* was really Limburg. He instructed Bernadotte to march immediately to

Marceau's assistance, and ordered a reserve of cavalry to support him. But it was too late, an untoward event had already determined Marceau's retreat from the positions he had so long and so stubbornly contested.

Jourdan's report on the events of this day says : " Marceau was attacked by forces far more considerable than I presumed the enemy had before him. But this valiant general sustained the enemy's shock with great intrepidity, and maintained his position before Limburg after having inflicted severe losses on the enemy."

On the morning of the 17th September, Jourdan was on his way to Limburg, when he received the news that Marceau had retired on Molzberg. In fact, scarcely had Marceau despatched his last letter to Jourdan on the previous night, when a deplorable incident was reported to him. An extract from Castilverd's letter, dated 10 p.m., 16th September, will best explain what had occurred : " Adjutant-General Becker informs me," he writes to Marceau, " that the post of Dietz has been forced, and that his troops occupy, on the heights behind Dietz, the roads leading to Montabauer and Holtzappel. It is clear from this that the outlet of Limburg has been forced. Therefore I am without hesitation ordering an immediate retreat."

Marceau at once ordered Castilverd to reoccupy Nassau, but it was too late, for that general had fallen back precipitately by Montabauer and Le Coq Rouge to the bridge of Neuwied ; the Austrians were in possession of the Lower Lahn, and the

garrison of Ehrenbreitstein had been set free. It is necessary to lay stress on this event, as Beurnonville, on assuming the command, supported Castelvord, who belonged to his army, against Jourdan and the other generals. We have seen that Marceau was still master of the situation at Limburg on the night of the 16th September. It is true he could not have held out much longer unless reinforced, and the Austrians were in possession of Dietz ; but Bernadotte was already advancing and would have reached Limburg before noon, and Marceau only retired at 7 a.m., and then only because a dense fog gave him a favourable opportunity. As for Dietz, the advantage gained by the enemy was doubtful, as the defile leading out of the town is small, and any attempt to advance along the main roads would have been frustrated by Bonnet. Marceau, moreover, stated with confidence to Jourdan that if even moderately reinforced he would not only be able to maintain himself at Limburg, but would prevent the Austrians from issuing from Dietz. Castelvord's letter, if we continue our scrutiny, is self-condemnatory and illogical ; as Marceau pointed out to him in his reply, which bears evident marks of the rage of the writer : " You were wrong, general, quite wrong in making your retreat on probabilities. If you had but followed what I prescribed to you in my last, you would have seen that you ought not to have quitted your position until General Bonnet had informed you of his retreat. A single point of a line may be forced without the troops who defend it being obliged to retreat ; they might



even attack the point forced. This is what would have happened had you not been in such a hurry. I order you to march back at once to Nassau and to occupy the heights behind that town. It is highly disagreeable for me to have to suffer on account of your precipitation. You will have caused the defeat of the entire army, and it is I who will have to bear the blame."

In forwarding Castilverd's report to Jourdan from the heights of Limburg, Marceau comments severely on his retreat. He does not mind being in difficulties, he says, when it is for the service of the country, but he does not wish to have to command men like this. This mood of vexation and disgust soon, however, passed away. As may have been expected of one of so heroic a mould, Marceau, although weighed down with grief and pain, forgave Castilverd, and wrote to Jourdan on the 18th: "The mischief is done. I would rather bear the entire brunt of it than blame comrades, who, after all, are only to be pitied."

Marceau fell back slowly, profiting by the dense fog to gain a march on the enemy. He groaned with rage, says an eye-witness, as his soldiers filed past him, and seemed to regret each retrograde step. Twice he placed himself at the head of his squadrons and charged the too presumptuous enemy. It was his intention to retire to Altenkirchen by the direct route through Molzberg and Freylingen. With his right flank in the air and a superior enemy in front, he effected this movement with difficulty, being closely followed and continuously harassed

by the archduke's advance-guard and light artillery right up to Molzberg, where he took up a strong position and withstood all further attacks.

The archduke, debouching from Limburg, encamped on the heights of Offheim; Neu from Dietz, in the wood of Heistenbach; while a column of flankers advanced by Nassau, threatening Marceau's right flank.

Bernadotte hastened meanwhile to Limburg to assist Marceau, but instead of finding him he found the enemy. Though surprised he resolved to fight, and continued to do so until nightfall.

The position of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse had now become most critical. A glance at the map of the country will show how the left of the French army was compromised. Owing to the absence of communications in this part of Veteravia, a country of mountains, woods, and ravines, Jourdan's only line of retreat was on the Wiedbach behind Altenkirchen, whence he could reach the Sieg. To reach the Wied the extreme left would have to cover double the distance that the Austrians had to march in following the route from Dietz and Limburg, a route defended by only 5,000 men, or what remained of Poncet's division. "In such circumstances," say the Jourdan memoirs, "the archduke's circumspection, and the vigour and skill of Marceau, who stood firm against him, were the only guarantees of the safety of the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse."

As soon as Jourdan heard of the retreat of his right wing he ordered Grenier and Lefebvre to retire

by forced marches to Herborn, to cross the Dille at that point, and gain Hachenburg. Championnet followed the same route by the right bank of the Dille, and Bernadotte took the direction of Altenkirchen by Marienberg. All these movements, which commenced on the night of the 17th, were capable of execution, thanks to the firmness of Marceau, on the two following days.

On the morning of the 18th September Marceau wrote to Jourdan: "Being certain that Prince Charles was bringing up strong reinforcements against Limburg and Dietz during the night, and had perceived Castelvèrd's stupid retreat, and because of my inferiority, which would not have allowed me to fight as I did yesterday without incurring the risk of being entirely destroyed, I was obliged to fall back on Freylingen. I am informing Bernadotte of this, and sending back his troops. I will await your orders there, and shall hold out to the last if attacked. I am profiting by this mist to gain a march on the enemy."

On the evening of the same day he was able to write: "I am at Freylingen. The enemy has pursued us vigorously, but he has not succeeded in cutting off or breaking Bonnet's corps, which rejoined us this morning."

It was not long before the archduke came up with Marceau at Molzberg. The latter realized that the safety of the whole army depended on him, and, however difficult his task, he prepared to carry it out. For several hours he stood firm at Molzberg and then retired slowly, taking up a fresh position,

and then commencing the struggle anew. Never was rear-guard action fought more valiantly or with a clearer end in view, that is, to give time to the left of the army to place itself in line with the centre now retiring towards Höhn and Schomberg. Taking advantage of the peculiarities and the formation of the country, he manœuvred his corps accordingly, at one moment deploying his battalions, at another drawing them together in close serried ranks ; disputing every gorge and stream, each wood and plateau ; while, all the time, thousands of the enemy's cavalry and light troops pressed him close on all sides, assailing his flanks, and doing their utmost to intercept his line of retreat. In the din and smoke of battle the man grows larger before our eyes as he fights the desperate fight against tremendous odds, not with recklessness and despair, but calmly, firmly, skilfully, as though the reputation of his friend, and the honour of his country were at stake, and life had reached a climax when it would be better to die than yield uncontested one single advantage to the enemy. He fills his small band with confidence. His soldiers are surprised at nothing, they fear nothing. They obey him implicitly and calmly, as though they were not under fire. One moment a half-brigade of the 15th regiment of light infantry gives way. Marceau rides to the spot. "Soldiers of the 15th !" he cries, "you are unworthy of the French name which you dishonour by saving yourselves behind the cannon-wheels. I shall disgrace you for ever, and send you no more against the foe

unless you immediately drive out of this wood the handful of the enemy whom your cowardice has permitted to enter there. Advance and revenge your honour ; and as for you, officers, seek death rather than live to see your swords broken for you !” Inflamed by these words, the 15th half-brigade make a furious charge, which, being supported by the cavalry and artillery, inflicts a loss of 1,000 men on the enemy.

Both French and Austrian authorities are agreed that Marceau’s attitude on the 18th, and his determined charges, secured to Jourdan his retreat. After several hours’ fighting Marceau reached Freylingen. He had left Limburg on the morning of the 17th, and it was not till near noon of the 19th that he issued from the forest of Höchstenbach, and came in sight of Altenkirchen ; that is, the principal forces of the archduke were only able to advance a distance of some fifteen miles during the course of two and a half summer days.

From the heights of Freylingen Marceau wrote once more to Jourdan, informing him that he was without ammunition, and that 2,000 horse would scarcely meet his requirements. He has sent away two battalions and two squadrons to Altenkirchen, “to make sure of that point, which might be threatened by the enemy’s troops advancing from Montabauer.”

It was on the same day that Jourdan addressed a report to the Directory informing that body of the events since Castilverd’s disastrous abandonment of the Lahn, “and,” he adds, “as the army has been

without bread for four days, subsisting only on potatoes ; as the commissaries declare their inability to procure us any food, and as I have exhausted my ammunition, I am going to retire to the left bank of the Rhine. I have done all in my power to avoid this movement, but Castelvèrd's unfortunate manœuvre, and famine, constrain me to it."

The corps under Marceau left Freylingen at 4 a.m. on the 19th September. By 10 o'clock it had filed along the road to Altenkirchen, and reached the further end of the forest of Höchstenbach in front of Walrod, still closely pursued by the archduke's light troops. The French rear-guard engaged the enemy throughout the march. Marceau commanded it in person, and inspired it with so much confidence, and handled it so skilfully, that the enemy's efforts were everywhere frustrated.

The divisions of the left and centre of Jourdan's army were now about to form their line along the Wied, behind the defile of Altenkirchen. Bernadotte, who had passed through this defile quickly, took up his position behind the town and was thus able to support the retreat of the other columns, including that of Marceau, to whose assistance he sent forward a regiment of cavalry, fearing the enemy, who were advancing rapidly from Montabauer, might intercept the road at Walrod.

Unfortunately, in spite of his tenacity and because of the close pursuit of the enemy, Marceau had already cleared the forest of Höchstenbach, and approached the defile of Altenkirchen before the greater portion of the army had passed through it.

The moment was a critical one, and Jourdan sent word that he intended to reinforce him, but that meanwhile it was absolutely necessary he should suspend his march and hold the wood until the receipt of further orders. A portion of Marceau's column had therefore to turn back, and the rear-guard had to re-enter the forest whence it had just emerged.

After placing six light guns on two *mamelons* covering the outlet of the wood, Marceau ordered his division to the front and himself advanced to reconnoitre the enemy, accompanied by his engineer officer, Souhait, and two orderlies. He was riding a fine chestnut horse, and wore the uniform of a *chasseur à cheval* without the scarf, the plume of his shako was wanting, a ball from a biscaien having carried it away on the bridge of Limburg.

An Austrian hussar of Kayser's regiment appeared suddenly in front, amusing the small party by his incongruous movements. It was then 11 o'clock. Suddenly a shot was fired from the carbine of a Tyrolese chasseur concealed behind a bush on the road. Marceau retired without speaking a word, while one of his suite sabred the hussar; the Tyrolean sharpshooter escaped. At three hundred paces from the wood Marceau dismounted, saying he was mortally wounded, but begging that the fact should be concealed from his troops. He was first placed on two muskets and carried thus to the nearest village, where a ladder covered with straw and military cloaks was substi-

tuted until a surgeon arrived. The ball, it was found, had pierced the flesh of the right arm below the elbow and, entering the body beneath the lowest rib, had passed through it, remaining under the skin on the left side whence it was extracted.

A party of his grenadiers carried him, accompanied by loud expressions of grief as he passed through the columns of the troops he had commanded and those of Bernadotte's division. The sight of him lying wounded, his shirt covered with blood, evoked the profoundest sorrow. Not a word was said, and the silence of the onward march was only broken by the ill-stifled cries of the soldiers who pressed around their general. The road was long and difficult and the heat excessive, but the grenadiers who carried him refused to be relieved. At length, after three hours, the gate of the town of Altenkirchen was reached.

Altenkirchen lies between two mountain ranges and behind the small stream of the Wied. The great road by which Marceau was conveyed crosses this stream by a single-arched stone bridge within gun-shot of the town. It was on this bridge that Jourdan with his staff and several other generals met Marceau. All were profoundly affected at the sight. Jourdan, and the other officers who knew him, shed tears, and on the countenances of all could be read the grief that speaks loudest in silence.

Marceau suffered much, but he presented a calm face to his friends, alarmed at his condition. He made no complaint except when his friends ex-



pressed their regrets. "Why do you pity me," he said to these, "I am very happy in that I die for my country." To Jourdan he said: "In the name of the friendship of which you have given me so many proofs, let me recommend to you the officers who have served near me, and my family." He took Bernadotte's hand in his and begged of him that his troops should not be allowed to retire in disorder before the enemy. The request was unnecessary, for Jourdan himself issued orders to Marceau's rear-guard. This handful of brave men, though forced to retire, faced the enemy again and again, seeking to avenge their general, and held the Austrians back until the last of the columns had taken up its position on the heights behind Altenkirchen.

At 6 p.m. Marceau was carried to the house of the Prussian governor of the town. He was very feeble and not in a condition to be removed any further, certainly not to the left bank of the Rhine. The enemy meanwhile continued to advance, and Jourdan was obliged, however reluctantly, to leave his friend and those who remained in attendance on him to the generosity of the enemy. It was a cruel separation, for Marceau had frequently expressed a wish not to be left in the hands of the enemy, and would rather have died than be made a prisoner of war. He was now allowed to sleep, and the wound was not dressed till late in the evening. He passed a tranquil night, although he breathed with difficulty, and his pulse was quick. Before leaving his bedside Jourdan wrote to the Austrian generals,

appealing to their honour, and begging that Marceau should not be considered a prisoner of war.

The Austrians entered the town on the morning of the 20th September, when a captain of Kayser's hussars, of the advance-guard, came to see Marceau. This officer wrote to General Haddich, passing on Jourdan's letter to him. At 9 a.m. Haddich came to see him, expressed his grief at the incident, proffered his services and gave him a safe-guard. Soon after, Prince Charles himself sent his surgeon to him to treat him in concert with the French surgeons. Most of the general officers and some others of the Imperial army came to see him as they passed through Altenkirchen, as a mark at once of their esteem and their sympathy. But nothing was more touching than the attentions of the veteran, General Kray. He remained long at Marceau's bedside, sorrow plainly depicted on his noble countenance. In his grief he took the dying man's hand in his and pressed it to his heart, and, while he sought to console those who stood mournfully around, tears ran down his own cheeks as he bent his gray head over the trembling pulseless hand.

The corps of Blankenstein and Barco's hussars, whom Marceau had so often engaged in mortal combat, came especially to see him, their expressions of regret as sincere as those of his dearest friends. Friend and foe pressed around that bed of death to get a glimpse of the soldier cut off in his prime, but the renown of whose humanity, even more than of his valour, had long filled the camps of the rival armies, and the cities and provinces they occupied.

Sensation now began to cease, and death approached. Marceau continued to speak very calmly, with that gentleness and affability at all times natural to him. He suffered agonies, and it was found necessary to enlarge the wound. Two operations were performed, which he underwent with the greatest courage and composure. He consoled his friends, and spoke of death as a happy moment that would pass easily and quickly away. Towards night alarming symptoms showed themselves, his sufferings increased, and he could no longer sleep. It was now that he made certain of death, in spite of the hopes that had been held out to him. At 1 o'clock on the morning of the 21st he dictated his last wishes and dispositions to Captain Souhait, and signed them, and a moment afterwards lost consciousness. In his delirious sleep he spoke of soldiers and battles, and of his retreat from Limburg. At 3 a.m. he recovered consciousness and recognized the Austrian general, Elsnitz, who was seated by him, told him his name, gave some instructions, then fell back exhausted. After a while he mentioned the names of all those whom he loved, of his nurse, of his sister Emira, of Agathe. Then, gazing at Souhait, he said: "My friend, I am no more." For a moment he appeared much agitated, but at last his pulse failed, his extremities grew cold, his eyes became fixed, and his head sank gently like a flower whose stem the sickle has cut off. At 6 o'clock on the morning of the 21st September his life was merged for ever in that which we call death.

He died at the age of twenty-seven. Of him it might be said, as of the young soldiers who perished in the Peloponnesian war, "the army had lost its spring-time." The Archduke Charles said in his report: "Marceau's death has palpably influenced the French soldiers, and this last fight appears to have entirely shaken their courage." The Austrian spoke true, for with Marceau the soul of the French resistance appears to have fled.

After informing the Directory of the incidents of the 19th September, ending with his having to leave Marceau wounded in Altenkirchen, Jourdan added: "I will pass no eulogy, citizen directors, on this general; you have long known his talents and his courage. The Republic loses, by this event, one of its best generals, and I a sincere friend." On the 21st September Jourdan again wrote: "I have to inform you, citizen directors, that the general of division, Marceau, has succumbed to his wounds. The zeal, the military talents, the intrepid courage of this officer must make his loss felt to all who love their country, and the qualities of his heart redouble the regrets of his numerous intimate friends."

We shall not have occasion to speak of Jourdan again in connection with Marceau's life. He passes out of this biography, as he does for a while out of the pages of history. On the 21st September the divisions of his Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse crossed the Sieg, and on the following day Beurnonville, at the head of 25,000 men of the Army of the North, took over the command from him. Jourdan

had not been successful, but he had at least saved his army, enveloped on all sides by infinitely superior forces. Both he and the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse were the victims of a vicious plan of campaign and of the neglect and incapacity of the politicians whose work it was and who had failed, both directly and through the representatives of the people and the commissaries of war, to act their part honestly.

Marceau's last letter was addressed to Jourdan. He appealed to him on behalf of others, and asked for the promotion and recognition of those who had served immediately under him, both for their services in the field and particularly for the valour they had displayed in the last fight in the woods before Freylingen. Before this letter reached him, Jourdan, following the advice of his friend, had already passed into the bosom of his family, having refused the offer of the command of the Army of the North.

Souhait, who was with Marceau to the end, found suspended round his neck a portrait that had not left its place for two years. It was a portrait of Agathe de Châteaugiron taken from a miniature in the possession of her brother Hippolyte. Souhait sent it to Emira by whom it was forwarded to the Châteaugiron family. Agathe's letters to Marceau were likewise all sent, after the latter's death, to Madame Leprêtre. Marceau had betrayed his secret to no one except to Kléber, who was Madame Leprêtre's friend. Kléber was at this time absent from the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse. When he heard of Marceau's death he shut himself up in

his room and was inaccessible for two days to all who sought his society.

Marceau had charged Caffarelli Dufalga, the Adjutant-General of his division, to write to Emira and give her the news of the event "which separates me from her for ever." She was at Bâle when the intelligence of her brother's death was brought to her. She had been expecting him to join her there, when she would have had the pleasure of informing him that everything was ready for his marriage with Agathe Leprêtre. It is best to draw at once the veil of pity over the grief of the two women, who, first and best, had loved Marceau in life ; of the brave faithful sister who had been even more than a mother to him, and of the affianced wife whom death robbed of the realization of her dearest hopes. On receipt of the news Madame Leprêtre wrote to Emira : "You have to mourn a brother, and I a son, who would have been the charm and the solace of my life since he would have made the happiness of my daughter's."

The following is a portrait of Marceau as he appeared before his death, painted by another faithful friend, his brother-in-law, Sergeant : "He was a little over five feet nine inches in height, robust, and very well made. He excelled in all exercises. His face was perfectly oval. He had large brown eyes, and his whole expression was soft and amiable. He had a Grecian nose, and lips which unmistakably indicated pride. His forehead was high and noble, and his complexion clear. He wore his dark chestnut hair long ; the eyebrows were of the same

colour as the hair, the moustache of a more reddish tinge. His bearing was generally careless, but under arms he assumed a bold and martial appearance. He commanded with firmness, though without harshness. Outside the service he forgot he was a general, and, without permitting any familiarity, made others forget it too." Marceau was in fact a superb figure, and excepting perhaps Kléber, one of the most manly forms that could be found in the Army of the Sambre-and-Meuse.

Marceau's body had now to be removed to Coblenz. At Altenkirchen there was almost a struggle between the French and the Austrians for the honour of conveying it as far as Neuwied. The wishes of the latter prevailed, and a detachment of Branco's hussars formed the escort, and the Austrian officers made all the preparations. It was about this time that Prince Charles entered the chamber of death. He stood for a moment gazing on the face of his adversary. They were both of the same age. He knelt at his bedside for a while, then, shading his eyes with his hand, left the room in silence.

At some distance from the Rhine the funeral *cortège* was met by the garrison of Ehrenbreitstein with Kray at their head, come out to render the last honours to a generous foe. They accompanied him as far as the *tête de pont* of Neuwied, where the body was handed over to the French, and conveyed at midnight to the ancient chapel of the Electoral Château of Coblenz, followed by the entire division lately commanded by Marceau, and by many of the town and country folk, especially those of Darm-

stadt, while the people of Coblenz itself stood in the streets, with bared heads and torch in hand, and watched the sad procession pass by.

The funeral took place on the 24th September. Marceau was buried on the glacis of Fort Petersberg, which lies to the north of Coblenz, not far from the great road connecting that town with Düsseldorf and the north. During the service and for some time after, the cannon of the two belligerent nations answered each other at intervals across the valley of the Rhine, and the bells of the surrounding churches tolled out their solemn tones in minor accompaniment, as requiem for the dead.

At Kléber's instance a subscription was started to raise a lasting monument to the heroic defender of the Republic. The family of Leprêtre subscribed 6,000 francs towards the work, which was completed exactly a year afterwards.

The second obsequies of Marceau took place on the 24th September, 1797. The body was exhumed and found perfect. It was placed in an iron coffin and then delivered to the flames in the presence of a vast assemblage of troops who had just accompanied the remains of another hero, the remains of Lazare Hoche, to a resting-place by the side of Marceau. After the cremation the ashes were gathered up and placed in a bronze urn on which were engraved the simple words "*Hic cineres ubique nomen.*" A pyramid of stone was erected on the spot and the urn placed inside it. A funeral discourse was pronounced by Hardy, Marceau's old comrade and friend, while others, whose names we



have come across, Lefebvre and Championnet, Grenier and Klein, stood by.

In 1804 the door of the mausoleum was broken open and the tomb rifled. The urn was found overturned and its ashes scattered, probably by some wretch who had hoped to find treasure in it. A searching inquiry was held by the local authorities, but the author of the odious act was never discovered. The rescued urn was placed in the Prefecture, whence it disappeared mysteriously and unaccountably. The Emperor Napoleon ordered that the glorious ashes, such was his expression, should be gathered up and the mausoleum restored, with all suitable pomp and ceremony, an edict that was useless, seeing that the ashes had been scattered to the four winds.

In 1819 Coblentz once more passed into the hands of the Prussians. During the construction of new fortifications by them it was found necessary to remove the pyramid. Every precaution was taken, and the cenotaph was reconstructed stone by stone, with its lion guarding the rifled chamber, at the foot of Fort Frank near Lutzen-Coblentz and closer to the great *chaussée* that leads from Coblentz to the north, on a site where it still stands, conveying to all who pass up the pleasant valleys of the Rhine and the Moselle, a glorious lesson of humanity, and recalling to us a life that was once full of simple and tender hopes and aspirations, but was laid down without a pang in the discharge of a great and heroic duty.

There are a few well-known portraits of Marceau.

The one by Barbier the younger was executed by the order and at the expense of Agathe Leprêtre. It represents Jourdan meeting the wounded general in front of Altenkirchen. The best portrait, perhaps, is that by Sergent. The remarkable bronze statue by Pérault, in the Place des Epars, was taken from this portrait and from an accurate description of Marceau sent to the sculptor by Sergent in his old age. Pérault's statue was inaugurated in September, 1851. In the base of the monument there was placed at the same time an alabaster box containing some of the supposed ashes of Marceau, rescued from the overturned urn of the pyramid at Coblenz. The statue, with a few relics, can be seen in the interesting town of Chartres, the birthplace to us of one of the most sympathetic figures of the period of the French Revolution.

NOTE.—A few words as to what became of Marceau's closest friends :

Souhait, who had a marble plaque placed in the forest of Höchstebach to mark the spot where Marceau was wounded, retired for a while, after the latter's death, from the army, and studied at the School of Engineering at Metz. He died at Damietta in Egypt, where he had accompanied Berthier, of wounds received at the siege of St. Jean d'Acre.

Constantine Maugars continued to serve in the army under Napoleon, and attained the rank of captain. Being wounded at Wagram, he asked of Napoleon that a pension might be granted to Emira

Marceau. Maugars was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and, two years afterwards Emira obtained a life annuity of 2,000 francs.

After her divorce from Champion, Emira married Sergent, and accompanied him during his exile in Italy, he having been banished from France. They earned a livelihood by their engravings, and died in old age.

Agathe de Châteaugiron, after the lapse of some years, married the Marquis of Dodon, secretary to the French ambassador at Venice, the husband selected for her by her father, to whom, together with the countess, her mother, she was once more reconciled.



# APPENDIX.

## I.

### STATEMENT OF THE SERVICES OF MARCEAU PREPARED BY THE MINISTER OF WAR.

<p>MARCEAU- DESGRAVIERS François-Séverin, son of François-Séverin Marceau-Des- graviers and of Victoire Gaulier. Born the 1st March, 1769, at Chartres (Eure-and-Loir).</p>	Enlisted in the Angoulême (Infantry) 2 Dec. . . . .	1785
	Admitted into the National- Guard of Chartres in Oct. .	1789
	Struck off the Register, 30 Au- gust (having already quitted the corps in July, 1789, to enter the National-Guard of Paris) . . . . .	1790
	Captain of 2nd Company on formation of 1st Battln. of Volunteers of Eure-and-Loir 6 Nov. . . . .	1791
	Adjutant-Major 1 Dec. . . .	1791
	2nd Lieutenant - Colonel 25 March . . . . .	1792
	Nominated First Lieutenant in 1st Light Chasseurs of the Germanic Legion 4 Sept. .	1792
	Captain of 19th Regt. Chas- seurs à Cheval 1 May . .	1793
	Adjutant-General and Battalion Commander in Army of the Coasts of La Rochelle 15 June	1793.

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Nominated provisionally General of Brigade by the representatives of the people with the Army of the West 16 Oct.	1793
Confirmed in this grade 5 Nov.	1793
General of Division 10 Nov. .	1793
General-in-Chief <i>par interim</i> of the Army of the West 28 Nov.	1793
Obtained leave on account of health, and quitted command of Army of West 30 Dec. .	1793
Employed in Army of Ardennes 14 April . . . . .	1794
Employed in Army of Sambre-and-Meuse 13 June . . .	1795
Died on 20 Sept. in consequence of wounds received the day previously in the combat of Altenkirchen . .	1796

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Campaigns. 1793 with the Armies of La Rochelle and the West; 1794, 1795, and 1796 with the Armies of Ardennes and the Sambre-and-Meuse.

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## II.

MARCEAU, GENERAL OF DIVISION AND  
COMMANDANT OF THE ARMY OF THE  
WEST (*par interim*).

TO THE MINISTER OF WAR.

*At the Headquarters of the Army at Le Mans, 23rd  
Frimaire, Year II. of the Republic one and indivisible  
(13th December, 1793).*

YOU will have seen from my last that we were in a position not only to wait upon the enemy, but even to engage them in battle if an opportunity for doing so occurred, before our junction with the army approaching from the north.

Westermann, ordered to harass and reconnoitre the enemy, attacked them yesterday most vigorously with his small advance-guard at the gates of Le Mans. His inferiority in numbers compelled him to fall back for the time before the enemy's entire army in ambush before Pontlieu.

The column, under the orders of the General of Division, Mallet [Müller], told off to support Westermann, was unable to withstand the violence of the enemy's shock, and fell back with very little order on the column commanded by General Tilly, who, being prepared, advanced and charged the enemy, and soon forced them in turn to take to flight, even up to the intrench-

ments made to support the designs of these rascals. Nothing stopped the ardour of our troops commanded by the brave Tilly. Intrenchments, bridges, all were carried, and soon Westermann, at the head of his cavalry and a portion of Tilly's advance-guard, forced the enemy at all points, and our victorious troops entered Le Mans.

The robbers, intrenched on the Grande Place, resisted throughout the night in a manner wholly unexpected; their cannon, bearing on all the issues, stopped our troops during a portion of the night, but nothing could resist the valour of our brave Republicans. At break of day the Free Chasseurs, together with Tilly's advance-guard, beat the charge, and drove the enemy away everywhere at the point of the bayonet, and compelled them to take to flight.

Ten pieces of cannon, many ammunition waggons, and a great quantity of war material has been left in the abandoned town, and to give you a correct idea of the haste with which they fled, you will learn with pleasure that most of the women who followed them are in our power, and that many relics, such as holy crosses, mitres, etc., have been abandoned by the rascals, who, with the aid of these symbols of fanaticism have misled so many thousands.

It will be difficult for me to give you the exact number of the killed on the side of the enemy in this affair, which you can well consider as the hottest since the commencement of the war against the rebels; but I can assure you that more than three thousand fanatics bite the dust at this moment. The squares and streets are strewn with their bodies, and with the guns they threw away in their flight.

If only the so-called Army of the North were at my disposal at this moment, I should be able to assure you



that the brigands would cease to exist in a few days. But what matters? Nothing can stop my zeal, or that of the troops I command. I shall pursue this rascally horde without relaxation; at the same time I shall take all precautions against possible reverses.

This day will have been as fatal to the enemy as yesterday. To-morrow, if I overtake them, I will deliver battle, and I can count on a continuation of success unless I meet with some unforeseen misfortune. The army, though fatigued with constant marching, shows the greatest zeal and courage. D'Autichamp was wounded and several chiefs were killed. The scarfs, crosses, etc., will give you proof of what I assert.

It will add to the satisfaction that every Republican will experience when he hears of our success, that our losses have been inconsiderable. Thirty killed and 150 wounded are the sole victims of the fury of these barbarians, and what I say is the truth.

I cannot abstain from making mention of the brave men of this army, who have this day given proofs of heroism. Westermann, Tilly, the officers of their staffs, my aides-de-camp, all deserve to have praise lavished on them, all have vigorously co-operated with me in this affair, and I ought to add that it is to the characteristic intrepidity of the first-named officer that we owe our prompt success. His courage is almost without example. He had two horses killed and one wounded under him, and though himself wounded in two places he never left the field of battle, and is still pursuing the enemy, of whom he makes a great carnage. Regiments No. 6, *ci-devant* Armagnac, and 31, *ci-devant* Annis, have in particular displayed great courage. All the troops have done their duty, and one can consider the total destruction of the rascals as imminent.

P.S.—I have but this moment received a letter from Westermann, informing me that he has killed a great many of the robbers, has taken all their caissons, and that already a large quantity of shells and cartridges has been sent back here. *Ça ira ou le diable y perdra son latin.*

### III.

FROM MARCEAU TO THE MINISTER OF WAR.

15th December, 1793.

YOU will have seen from my last letter that the Cherbourg column, commanded by Tilly, not only arrested the almost victorious enemy, but threw them into disorder, and forced them to retreat so precipitately that it crossed the bridge of Le Mans with the enemy, entered the suburbs, and almost penetrated into the town. The column met with a serious resistance, however, when it reached an intrenchment cut across the streets. Consulting only its courage, it threw itself impetuously on the rebels, and took four guns from them. These, entirely disconcerted, had no other resource than to take refuge in the houses, and fire from the windows. Their fire was so well sustained that it stopped us quite short. I thought it prudent not to expose the men gratuitously, and I contented myself with pointing their own guns against them. During the rest of the night I sent them three waggon loads of the shot and shell they had left in our hands. I determined so much the more readily not to push on because the first division, commanded by

Kléber, was still at some distance from us. It did ten leagues that day. On hearing of the fight it forgot its fatigues, and, doubling its pace, arrived an hour before daylight.

Tilly's column, which had not ceased to fight, with an obstinacy equal to that of the Vendéans, was very much fatigued. I caused its posts to be relieved by the first division. The day had scarcely commenced to dawn when the advance-guard of this division came and asked permission to make a bayonet charge. I granted it. A gloomy silence, interrupted by cries of triumph, announced the success of this measure.

This audacity, truly Republican, disconcerted the enemy, who, evacuating the houses in crowds, thought now of nothing but their safety in flight, abandoning their baggage and throwing away their guns. They took the route to Laval. Our soldiers butchered them frightfully in the town, and pursued them so persistently on the road that soon it was no longer a few fugitives, but the entire advance-guard that was attacked.

I gave Westermann orders to ride in pursuit with all his cavalry. The promptitude with which he executed this order did not give the enemy time to proceed very far. He came up with them, and, charging with intrepidity, created so great a terror among the Vendéans that they no longer thought of offering any resistance. The light infantry followed the cavalry closely. Fatigued as they were, our troops pursued the enemy for eight leagues. Seven pieces of cannon and nine caissons remained in our hands. The peasants of the country have shown no favour to such of the fugitives as quitted the roads.

## IV.

FROM GENERAL MARCEAU TO THE MINISTER OF  
WAR.

*From the battle-field near Montoir, 23rd December, 1793.*

I INFORMED you in my last that the enemy appeared by its march on Nort to wish to betake itself to Rennes or into the Morbihan. It made up its mind at last and entered Blain, where it met with no resistance whatever. The destruction of the bridges and the construction of intrenchments on the road between Nort and Blain seemed to announce the design of its maintaining itself in this post, advantageous by its position and by reason of an old but fairly strong château.

Westermann, with his cavalry supported by a small body of light infantry, continually harassed the rear of the Vendean army, and attacked it incessantly, and thus put it on the wrong scent, making it believe that the entire army was pursuing it in that direction. A small affair, in which the soldiers of the advance-guard, after having shown great courage in swimming the river which separated them from the enemy, were repulsed, confirmed the Vendéans in this opinion.

But it was, no doubt, the wish of the genius of liberty that we should meet with this slight check in order that I should be given time to arrive before Blain by a cross-road. I was obliged to bivouac the troops and defer the attack till the next day. The enemy remained in order of battle on the heights. They confined themselves to firing a few cannon-shot at us.

When day appeared I ordered Kléber to attack them, but, as he deployed, my scouts came and informed me that the enemy, profiting by the darkness, had evacuated Blain, and betaken themselves to Savenay. I resolved to pursue at once so as to give them no time to recover. Our cavalry overtook them twice before they reached Savenay. On the news that Westermann was engaged, Kléber left with a piece of light artillery, and two or three hundred grenadiers. He drove off the enemy, who had taken possession of the road of Savenay, and of that from Vannes to Nantes. He had scarcely arrived within range, when, without permitting a single shot, he led his troops forward with bayonets fixed. The impetuosity of this attack made the enemy fall back and abandon to us a piece of eight which they had in position on the great Savenay road.

When the advance-guard arrived it wished to have the satisfaction of contributing to the glory of the day. Having been inundated with rain on the previous night's bivouac it now asked permission to enter Savenay. I thought I might permit this and make the most of this excellent spirit. The affair, however, became more serious than I had believed it would, and because of the resistance offered by the enemy, favourably posted in a wood, I stopped the advance-guard and made it bivouac within half-range of the guns of the enemy, who never slackened fire throughout the night. My advance-posts were scarcely a gun-shot off from them. As the different bodies of troops arrived during the night I made my dispositions for attack for the next day at dawn. The enemy had taken our prudence for weakness and, in consequence, not only waited for us, but at break of day came out to attack us. We were already on horseback.

The impetuosity of their attack would have had serious consequences had it not been for the precautions of our

commanders. Kléber, who had made a good beginning the day before, directed the forces at his disposal with so much precision, that the enemy were instantly checked and vigorously driven back.

The divisions under the orders of General Canuel and Tilly, on the left and right respectively, succeeded in disconcerting the Catholic horde. The soldiers, one and all, disdained to use their cartridges, and charged with bayonets fixed. The rout of the enemy was soon complete. I entered Savenay at the head of the centre of the army. Five pieces of artillery and an ammunition waggon were found abandoned here.

Proceeding, I met Kléber. In the absence of any cavalry we made a charge together with the aid of the generals and their staffs and others who happened to be near us.

The Loire on the left, and some marshes on the right, cut off all means of final escape to the enemy. Our further progress was not barred. M. de Langrenière, who had taken shelter with his troops in some houses to the left of the road, wanted to offer resistance, but, seeing the inutility of it, he surrendered when invited to do so by a staff-officer. The cavalry was taking away a piece of light artillery. But it soon fell into our hands. Two hundred horsemen saved themselves in the marshes. Their infantry is reduced henceforth to nothing.

The war of La Vendée is at length over on the right bank of the Loire. After a short sojourn in these cantonments the few foot-soldiers who might have escaped under cover of the forests will have been accounted for.

It would be difficult for me to detail the great deeds that this day has witnessed, but I cannot refrain from mentioning the generals, who by their bravery and their talents have hastened the end of this war. Kléber has on

this occasion exhibited his usual courage and superior talent. Westermann, Canuel, Tilly, Dembarrère, Savary, and all the general and senior officers have shown themselves to be true Republicans.

The soldiers of each army have likewise shown that they are worthy of the cause they defend. There has never been an instance, I might venture to say, of a patience so enduring, and a courage so heroical. For the last three days they have been wet to the skin ; most of them have bivouacked for two nights without a fire. They have never murmured. The cries of " Long live the Republic " have been a sure guarantee of what one could expect of them. It is a great pleasure to me to be able to render justice to my brave comrades.

This battle can be regarded as the most memorable, as well as the most bloody, since the commencement of the war of La Vendée. I can say with certainty that the number of Republicans whose loss we have to deplore does not exceed thirty. We have over 250 wounded, and among them two officers.













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